

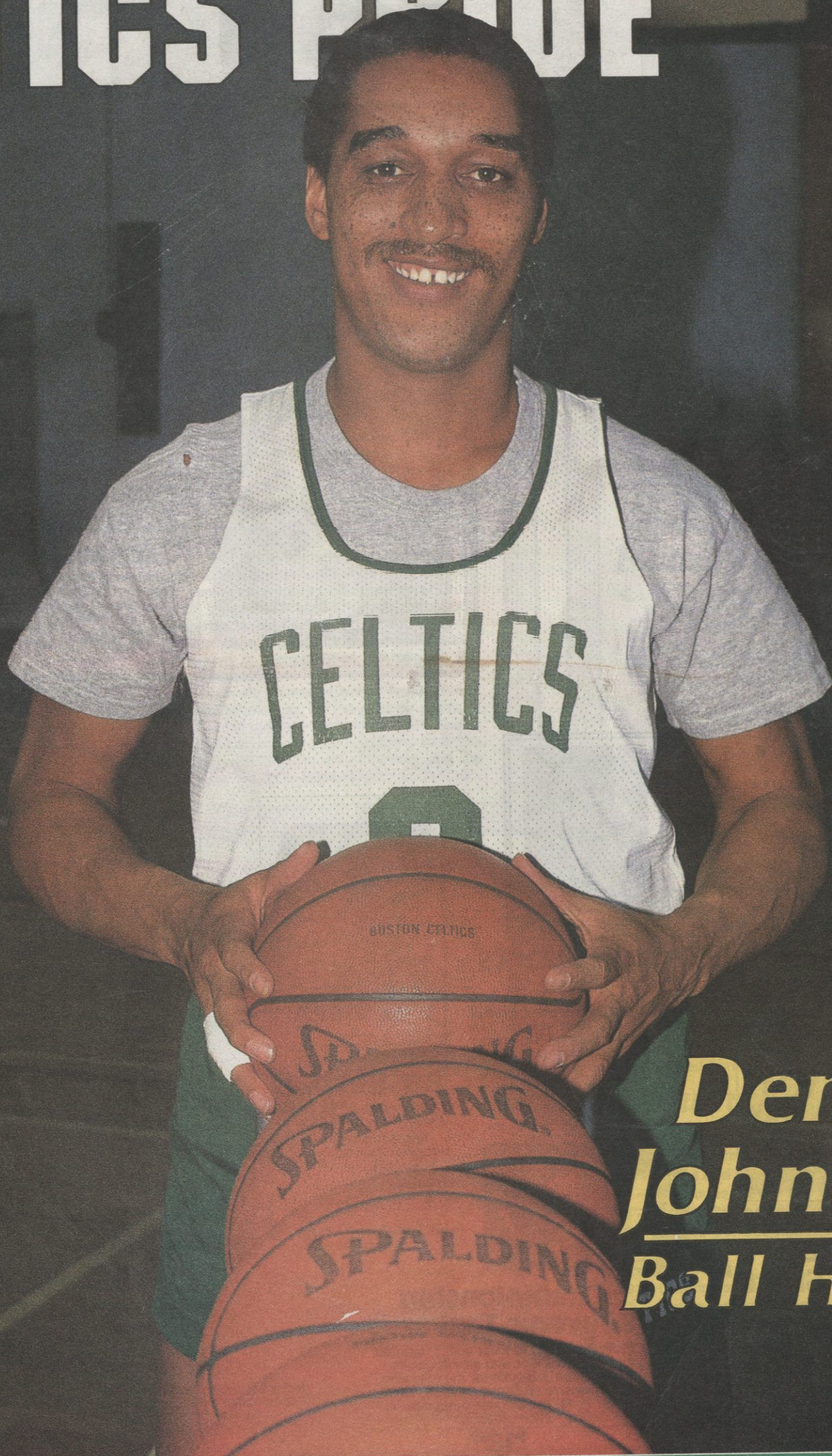
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BOSTON CELTICS PRIDE



Volume 3, Issue 12
April 26, 1988
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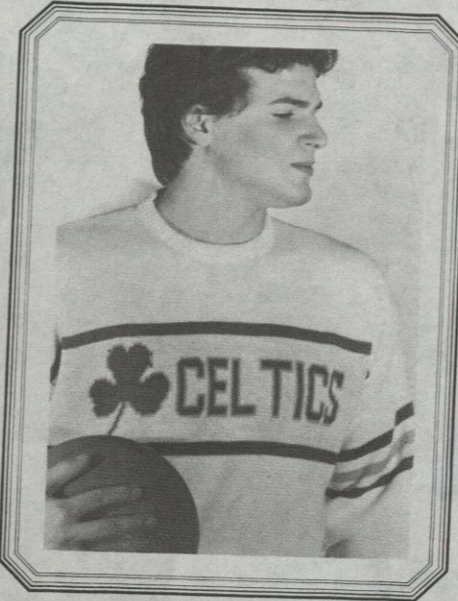
3



Jimmy Rodgers on the NCAA Tourney

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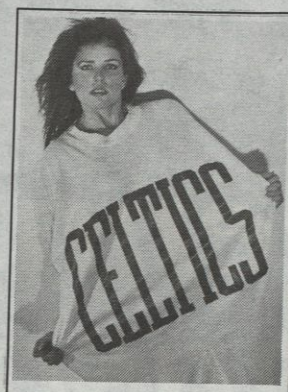
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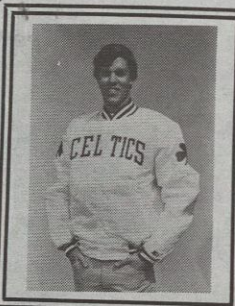
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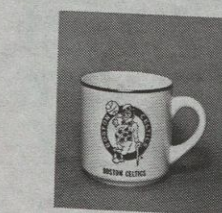
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BOSTON CELTICS PRIDE

Polaroid Sponsors Instructional Clinic



Celebrants of the Polaroid Instructional Clinic

The Polaroid Corporation, one of the primary corporate sponsors of the Boston Celtics, hosted the third annual Polaroid/Boston Celtics Instructional Basketball Clinic prior to the Celtics' March 20th game against the Chicago Bulls.

A large group of Polaroid's guests was joined by Celtics players Robert Parish, Dennis Johnson, Brad Lohaus and Mark Acres at a pre-clinic reception at the Blades and Boards Club below the Garden floor. Then, that group joined the more than 4,000 young basketball players from middle schools, Boys and Girls Clubs and leagues around the Boston area at the clinic on the parquet.

Head coach K.C. Jones, naturally, led the clinic, but he called upon various members of the coaching staff and team to lend their expertise. Larry Bird gave a lesson to the youngsters on free throw shooting; Jim Paxson and Danny Ainge participated in a three-point shoot-

ing contest; Bill Walton spoke about boxing-out and rebounding; Dennis Johnson demonstrated the proper techniques for playing man-to-man defense; Kevin McHale gave a lesson on post-up offense. Chris Ford and Jim Rodgers used the basketball from Waltham High School to illustrate the points being made.

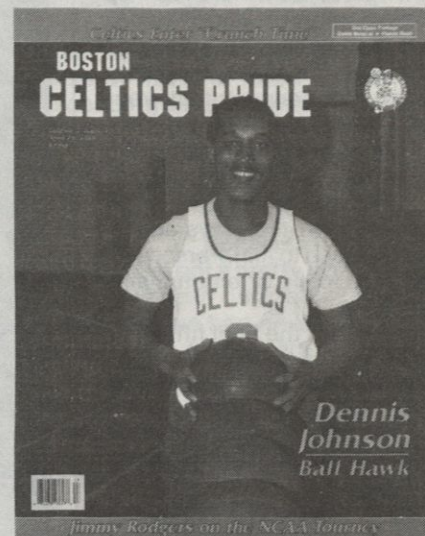
Prior to the instructional phase of the clinic, the group was entertained by the antics of Crazy George, a basketball trick-dribbling and shooting wizard who has performed in the Garden on numerous other occasions. Johnny Most also participated in the activities, performing the player introductions.

The Polaroid/Boston Celtics Instructional Basketball Clinic has, for the past three years, revived an old tradition for the team, when such clinics were an annual event. Judging from the success of the 1988 version, Polaroid and the Celtics have solidly re-established that tradition.

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 12
NUMBER 52
APRIL 26, 1988

Cover ...

Dennis Johnson, one of the best clutch players in the game today, is starting to enter the time of the season where his abilities will shine. Both offensively and defensively, DJ defines the term "ball-hawking" guard. Cover photography by Steve Lipofsky.



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4 Crunch Time for the Celtics

It's that time of year again! After another year of sterling regular season play, the Celtics now begin their push for the playoffs. Writer Bob Schron takes a look at this year's squad with G.M. Jan Volk.

8 The Celtics Ball Hawk

Dennis Johnson's list of contributions to the Celtics' success story has grown beyond measure. His desire to win has increased in each of his eleven seasons.

21 Jimmy Rodgers Looks at the NCAA's

Celtics assistant coach Jimmy Rodgers shares his thoughts on the NCAA Tournament, its pageantry, its effects on players' reputations, and its role in presenting the top talent to NBA scouts.

25 A Life in Basketball

Billy Cunningham's career has been a model of success. As a coach, Billy led a team of 76ers to countless playoff appearances and a championship; as a broadcaster his views and analysis have earned him respect among the media.

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APRIL 26, 1988

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1987-88 Promises a Furious End to the Season

By Bob Schron

Crunch Time for Celtics

The team has done it before, and now, as the 1987-88 NBA season rushes to its climax, the Celtics are individually and collectively gathering their forces to make a serious run at the championship.

"We have to keep playing good ball," floor leader Dennis Johnson commented after the Celtics eased by the Chicago Bulls and Michael Jordan, March 20. "Up until a few days ago, we weren't ready. Now we feel that we are. Any time you get down to the last fifteen-twenty games of the season you expect that your intensity and emotional level will pick up. Probably a lot of things pick up. We took time to tell this season; for example, we picked up Artis Gilmore, and it took time for him to learn the plays and in turn, for us to get used to him. Personally, I'm not tired physically or emotionally. Nobody (on our team) is."

How important are the final fifteen or twenty games of the season? Historically, in the Bird Era, the Celtics have used this time to either rest key players if the title was in hand, or have used the time to become more intense about the business at hand.

1981. The Celtics, trailing Philadelphia heading into the final month of the season, rally and defeat the Sixers in the final game of the season. This insures the homecourt advantage for the entire playoffs and this is critical when the Celtics nose out Philadelphia, 91-90 in Game 7 of the playoffs.

1986. In an informal meeting among the players at Hellenic College, Larry Bird, Bill Walton and Kevin McHale renounce beer until the playoffs are over. The team peaks, like an onrushing tidal wave, to win the championship.

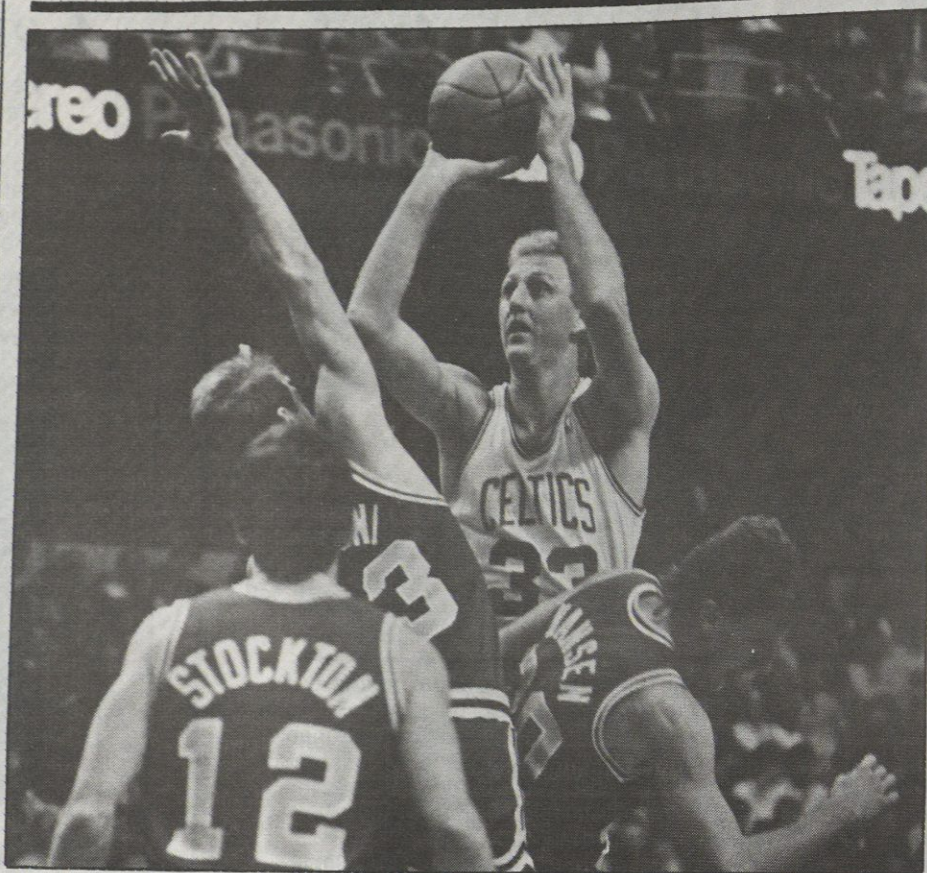
1987. Again, McHale and Bird do the talking after the Cs are defeated by the Nets in New Jersey, 117-108. The team works to improve its effort on the defensive end, and promptly goes out and plays its most intense quarter of the spring against the Knicks. The injured group never stops, either, taking the heavily favored Lakers to Game 6 of The Finals.

"I think there are two distinct goals that we're playing for this season (at this stage)," commented General Manager Jan Volk last week. "First is the tangible result of winning our games so that we end up with the best record in the conference for all of the benefits that bestows. The other goal is to go into the playoffs playing the best basketball we possibly can play."

Heading into the final month of the season, the Celtics led Detroit by one game. Boston had a 47-20 record, Detroit 45-20.

"One affects the other," continued the GM. "If we can get into a good groove and stay there, I think we have an excellent chance of winning the best record in the conference. If we don't I still would like to be playing very well anyway."

Volk was asked to compare the Celtics and Pistons. "It seems to be a function of where we're playing. If Bill Walton is back and healthy, I think it improves our bench immeasurably. We're able to match up very well up and down the line. If he isn't, I think they have an experience edge on us in depth. Their bench has



Larry's Looking to Groove.

shown more consistency and our lack of experience has meant less consistency. But I do think that looking at this season's results can be misleading. We played three games earlier in the season in the Silverdome when we depended on a different bench group. They were younger; now we have a different group."

The moves the team made, acquiring Artis Gilmore in January and Jim Paxson in February, have a direct influence on the last month of the season. "I think we viewed Artis' move as an opportunity to get a veteran center. We had Mark Acres and we thought Artis would give us a different look. He (Gilmore) took some time to adjust, but now he's playing well and we have a pretty good idea of what we'll get every game from him. With Jim, we made a move to get a top quality player and build our big guard depth. He's played well; the more and more he plays with the team, the more he's acclimating to his role and it's helped. Besides, when he came here he was just coming off of surgery and rounding into shape. I have to think that we'll be stronger as time goes on."

"If we play our game, we have the players to have a chance to win. I wouldn't concede anything to any team. With our moves, we've positioned ourselves so that ideally, we can play our players so that we won't run into an injury problem."

"That's the promising thing about this season compared to last. I think we are potentially a better team this year, because of our bench. We have better depth and that's a positive note, because you can't predict health. Last year, we were just beginning to have troubles, even though we weren't aware of it. Kevin's injury was worse than we had thought, Bill came back but then he went out again, Dennis' shoulder..."

"To honestly assess it, I wouldn't throw

our young players' talent, but you're never totally sure how a young player will deal with a playoff-type situation."

Kevin McHale, the team's veteran All-Star, is adamant in his belief that the final month of the regular season is an accurate predictor of how the team will fare later. "I think this is the time of the year that championships are won. We have a history of pulling together at this time of year. I think this team is a dominant factor in the league still. At least for this year and next."

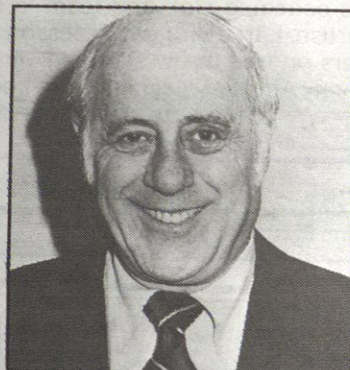
"I'm not terribly concerned with the West," Volk adds, "But I do keep an eye there, too. The Lakers are always a factor, but so are the records of Dallas and Portland. We'll want to beat them out, too in case either of those teams defeat the Lakers and we have to play them in The Finals. I think the Lakers are still the team to beat, though, both in the West and for the Championship. They're similar to us — if they're healthy, they feel good about themselves."

For now, the Eastern Conference best record is the goal that looms ahead. The Celtics play the Pistons twice in the final month, both in Boston, on April 1st and on April 21st in the last week of the season. Boston also plays Dallas in the Garden at noon on April 3rd. Boston plays seven games at home and six on the road (including games in Washington, Atlanta and Chicago during the final week.) Detroit plays seven at home and eight on the road. They play at New Jersey, at Philadelphia and at Atlanta in an extended trip April 5-9.

in the towel against anyone. I like our starters and our depth. I'm confident in

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ASK RED



By Red Auerbach

EDITORS NOTE: "Ask Red Auerbach" is a regular feature of *Celtics Pride*. If you have a question for Red, please send it to *Celtics Pride*, 49 Locust Avenue, New Canaan, Connecticut 06840. Red will answer as many as possible in each issue.

QUESTION: My husband, a big Celtics fan, has been looking for a warm-up outfit or a sleeper for our daughter, who is one month old. He has had no luck here in our area. Is there any place in Boston that I could write to, to obtain a catalogue or something like that to order out of?

Lila Horner, Lodi, OH

RED'S ANSWER: Well, I like to see you and your husband starting your daughter out early as a Celtics fan! Yes, I do have some suggestions about how you can purchase Celtics clothing, even for an infant. Since the late 1970s the National Basketball Association has done a great job of marketing clothing, souvenir items and novelty items for retail and mail order sale. NBA Properties has a very substantial and expanded catalog now of these items, and they are available through mail order. In fact, by the time you read this you will hopefully have already received an abridged catalog sent by my office. I'm surprised, though, that you can't find a store in your area that sells NBA-licensed products. Perhaps the first thing for you to try would be a phone call to the Cleveland Cavaliers office to ask which of the department stores in the Cleveland area carry those products. Then, if the catalog we've sent doesn't fill the bill, you might try calling or writing NBA Properties. Their address is: Olympic Tower, 645 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10022. The phone number is 212/826-7000.

QUESTION: I have a satellite dish and enjoy watching the Celtics, but I have a problem finding the away games. Can you help?

A Wisconsin Fan

RED'S ANSWER: It's interesting that you bring that question up. I have received a number of questions about the possibility of publishing, here in *Celtics Pride*, the satellite coordinates for the broadcasts of our games. It appears that there is an increasing number of people who own dishes, and that quite a few of those are Celtics fans. I will suggest to the editors of *Celtics Pride* that we publish here the coordinates of upcoming games in future issues. If at all possible, we will try to do that.

QUESTION: What kinds of cars do the Celtics players drive? Do they all drive expensive large cars like Mercedes?

John Lewis, Knoxville TN

RED'S ANSWER: No, on the contrary, if you were to come to one of our practices to check up on the cars waiting outside the gym, you would not have the impression at all that the people inside were stars or particularly wealthy. About half of our guys drive four-wheel drive vehicles, most of them Jeeps. Most of the rest of them drive more practical cars than you would think: Volkswagens, Subarus, Toyotas, etc. All of the coaches and many of the front office personnel drive Toyotas, as a result of our relationship with Wellesley Toyota, the official car dealership of the Celtics for the past ten years or so.

QUESTION: Do the players and coaches live all year in the Boston area? Do a lot of former players stay in the area?

Denise Sternberg, Sacramento, CA

of the building. In general, the parquet floor is removed from the arena and stored in the back of the building immediately after each of our games. The Boston Bruins, who are owned by the same people who own the Garden, frequently practice in the building in the morning after we've played a home game, so the "bull gang" — the guys who take the court and the yellow plywood floor that supports it and separates it from the ice — stay late and go into full action after our games. We usually practice at Hellenic College in Brookline, Mass., just 15 minutes or so from the Garden, but we do practice in the Garden maybe a dozen times a year or so, whenever our schedule fits in just right with that of the Bruins and the other events in the building. As far as shooting some baskets on a night off, our coaches try their best to tire the guys out on practice days; I doubt that many NBA players, who play every day for months on end with hardly a single day off, have much interest in practicing at night. Most of them, at least, on our team, look forward to spending a night with their families if they get a free night.

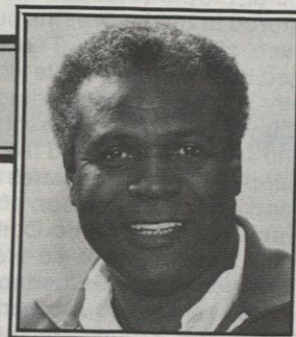
QUESTION: Have the Celtics ever lost a playoff series after winning the first two games? If they have, when was it?

Robert Cote, New York, N.Y.

RED'S ANSWER: I've got a pretty good memory, but I had to look this one up in our Media Guide to be sure of it. I was sure that we had never lost a series after winning the first two games, and I was right. But I remember very well the only time we ever won a series after losing the first two games. That was in the championship finals in 1969, the last championship we won in the Russell era. That year, the team's record had dropped to 48-34, the worst it had been in 13 years, and we had finished a distant fourth in the division. Everyone in the league expected that we had very little chance of repeating as champions. And when we lost the first two games of the series in Los Angeles, it looked hopeless. But these guys were real champions, who went on to win the next two games in Boston. Then, after losing Game Five back in Los Angeles, we won Game Six at home and then held on to win the final game in L.A.

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COACH'S CORNER

By K.C. Jones

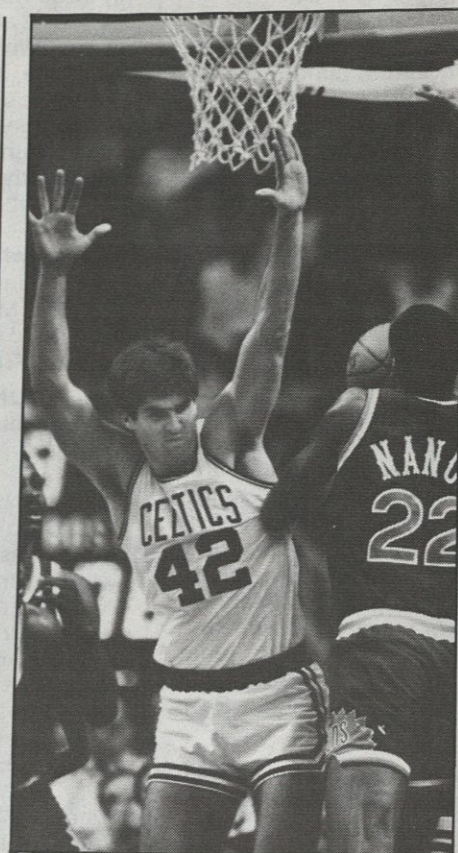
Five Seasons

I remember the afternoon like it was yesterday, even though I was actually on that plane five years ago. I was returning to Boston from the National Basketball Association Rookie Camp that's held annually in Chicago. As an assistant to Bill Fitch, I was scouting the prospects we were thinking of drafting in the upcoming draft, in three weeks. There were things on my mind, because after Fitch had resigned there had been rumors circulating that I might be hired as the next coach of the Celtics. Suddenly, my mind seemed as if it were engaged in a dream: there was an announcement over the speaker system in the plane, welcoming me aboard as the new coach of the Celtics. People began shaking my hand. Days later, I was seated next to my mentor, Red Auerbach and he was introducing me as the next coach of the team.

A meaningful story personally, and a suitable place to begin reviewing how our team is shaping up for the playoffs, which start later this month. In my job, I have to discipline myself never to look too far beyond the next ballgame. We do have the immediate goal in front of us — to nail down the best record in the East. Two big games against the Detroit Pistons loom ahead. We need to win these to clinch the spot. But sometimes it's helpful to look back and place the present in context; ideally, to avoid the mistakes of the past and repeat the ways we've been successful.

This year, I'm pleased because I believe we're in better shape heading into the postseason than we were last year. We're struggling at times in our offensive and defensive execution, yes, but we're peaking physically. Kevin McHale appears to be jumping, running and moving better than he has all season. The bench has worked out fine: Dirk Minniefield and Jim Paxson have played extremely well, with both men really adapting to our system, not having to think about what they're doing. Rather, they're running the plays effortlessly now. Artis Gilmore and Mark Acres have done the job, and Brad Lohaus has been coming along at the forward slot. So I have great hopes as we approach the second season.

1983-84. I've said on a number of occasions before, both in my book, *Rebound* and in interviews, that I never felt more pressure in sports than in my first year as coach of the Celtics. I felt I had to win because Red had really put himself on the line by hiring me to coach this great Celtics team. I remember several images from that season: Dennis Johnson's fantastic play, Larry Bird's MVP season, Robert Parish's sacrificing attitude and M.L. Carr's leadership off the bench. I recall the immediate chemistry our coaching staff (Jimmy Rodgers and



Mark Acres: Doing the Job

Chris Ford) had. I recall defeating the Lakers when Gerald Henderson made the key steal in Game Two of The Finals. I said during our seven game Finals win: "The Lakers had better talent than we did. But not necessarily a better team."

1984-85. We struggled into the playoffs that season. During a West Coast trip, we lost Robert, Cedric Maxwell and Quinn Buckner in one game, and later, M.L.'s career was ended for all reasonable purposes when he was injured in Utah. But we demonstrated tremendous resolve in getting to The Finals for the second straight year. Max was bothered with the knee, Robert's back was a nagging problem and, in the end, Larry's elbow and finger were injured to such an extent that we lost his scoring consistency, something we had depended on all year long. I just didn't feel very confident about our chances all spring, although we made it into The Finals again.

1985-86. I think we had some of the best rhythm as a team that year. Bill Walton came aboard and impressed everybody with his incredible talent and desire. People like Jerry Sichting, Scott Wedman, and Greg Kite played important supportive roles and this was the year Danny Ainge became a superstar. The man could play both ends of the court, and do it end-to-end. I was feeling very good about the Green Team that season; they understood their roles individually and as a unit. They respected the versatile and complementary talent of our starters and the mix worked out very well. What won it for us that year was the commitment everybody had to winning the championship.

1986-87. Misfortune swept through our ranks all year, beginning with Walton's injuries in training camp. We couldn't really count on Bill all year, even though he courageously went out in March and

tried to help us win it. Then Kevin broke his foot, Robert sprained his ankle and Dennis his shoulder, etc. Jerry Sichting was injured much of the season, too. Compared to this season, when we approach the playoffs in strong physical shape, last season was a nightmare. We had all those injuries and still the playoffs hadn't even begun! Our strategy was to play each game singly and then wait to see who could or couldn't go each night. (Kevin sat out part of the Milwaukee series; so did Danny, and then Robert was forced to miss some of each.) Last season, in the playoffs there was always something missing. We were interchanging lineups constantly and because of the injuries, constantly forced to slow the pace of the game down. We were a very, very courageous team. But against a team like the Lakers, as talented as they

are, we were not afforded the luxury of making even a solitary error. Unfortunately, we squandered a sixteen point lead in Game Four. The fatal error.

1987-88. We've had to work at it all year, fighting the inconsistency and injuries that slowed us down early in the year. For whatever reason (a letdown, possibly, after losing it last year, even though we had a bona fide championship effort) we have been loose sometimes on our offensive execution and unable to make a full commitment defensively. But the effort has been there, I believe.

We're a veteran team, an experienced team, and we believe in ourselves and our ability to get the job done. We definitely have the ability to win and the perseverance to meet the challenges of the playoffs. We'll have to match the intensity of teams coming into the Garden, ready to play at their peak against the Celtics. Nothing's changed in that regard. On the road, it's an issue of rededicating ourselves to coming out prepared to be the aggressors in our opponent's territory. This could win us the championship.

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NOTES AND QUOTES

By Jim Rucidlo

"The preparation time was put in, we seemed like we understood what we were trying to do, but when the lights come on and the ball goes up we have no application. Now I'll try to find out why we can't win in this building."

— Atlanta Hawks Coach Mike Fratello

□ □ □

Will they be waiting with open arms? Larry Bird will head home this summer with a first-time-ever 5-0 season sweep of the Indiana Pacers.

□ □ □

Michael Jordan speaks after an off (26 points) night at the Garden, where the Celtics won by 30. Two days earlier Jordan scored 50 and Boston lost in Chicago: "We beat the Celtics pretty handily in Chicago and naturally they wanted to return the favor — that's understandable. I think the refs made it clear there wasn't going to be much rough stuff today. They called a lot of touch fouls early."

"When I went out (picked up his fourth foul early in the third quarter) we were only down by two, and I think that knocked us out of our game. You can't be as aggressive as you'd like, and I like to use my defense and turn it into my offense."

□ □ □

"Michael Jordan didn't score 50 points, that's the first thing," explained Kevin McHale following the 30 point win. "When he's hot, he'll slice through three or four guys at once. There's no defense for that."

"Before Michael can be the MVP-type player — players on his team will have to complement him. Eventually, I think their young guys will."

□ □ □

NBA championship teams in each of the last four years have won at least 30 games in the second half of the season. Boston was 30-11 in 1983-84, the Lakers were 35-6 in 1984-85, Celtics 34-7 in 1985-86, and Lakers 33-8 in 1986-87. This year the Celtics will have to finish strong (13-2) to keep the trend intact.

□ □ □

Including the 1987-88 season, for the past five years the Celtics are the only NBA team to win at least 39 games in the first half of each season.

□ □ □

If Mike Fratello doesn't know why the Hawks can't win in the Garden, he should ask his star Dominique Wilkins: "I think we put too much emphasis on this type of game. It's not the playoffs, and we can't come out so tight and tense."

□ □ □

Most Celtics fans probably know that TV's *The Rifleman*, Chuck Connors, played 46 games with the Celtics in 1946-47 and four games in 1947-48, but do they also know he was a member of both the Dodgers and Cubs organizations?

□ □ □

Into the final quarter — league leaders with less than 20 games to play:

- Most points scored** — Portland Trail Blazers (115.2 ppg)
- Fewest points allowed** — Chicago Bulls (100.1 ppg)
- Best differential scored/allowed** — Los Angeles Lakers (112.6/106.1)
- Most Rebounds** — Dallas Mavericks (30.1)
- Highest FG%** — Boston Celtics (.518)
- Highest FT%** — Golden State Warriors (.803)
- Most Assists** — Boston Celtics (29.9 apg)
- Least Turnovers** — Atlanta Hawks (9.59)
- Least player disqualifications** — Lakers (8)
- Steals** — Denver Nuggets (6.69)
- Blocked shots** — Utah Jazz (5.02)

Bulls' coach Doug Collins on the Celtics: "If the Celtics have any weakness, it's playing against the penetrating dribble. When you don't have that, their defense is as good as any team in the league."

"Against the Celtics you have to take your chances. DJ is the only guy you can leave open. When DJ is making his jump shot, they're almost unbeatable because you always have to double down on McHale."

□ □ □

Jim Paxson rates his defensive performance against Michael Jordan: "I get a lot of credit, but I think he might have been tired late in the 3rd and 4th quarters and he might not have been as hungry as he was in Chicago."

"You try to keep Michael off the baseline, because if he gets there he's going to drive and dunk or get fouled or both."

□ □ □

Portland averages the most free throw attempts per game with 33.8, followed by Philadelphia 33.2, Detroit 32.1, and Washington 31.3. Indiana (24.6) averages the fewest free throws per game. Clyde Drexler, Charles Barkley, Adrian Dantley and Moses Malone are the leaders at the free-throw line for the four top teams.

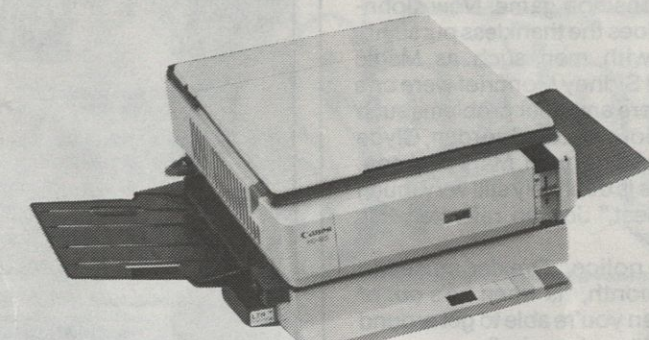
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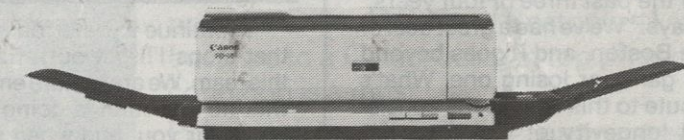
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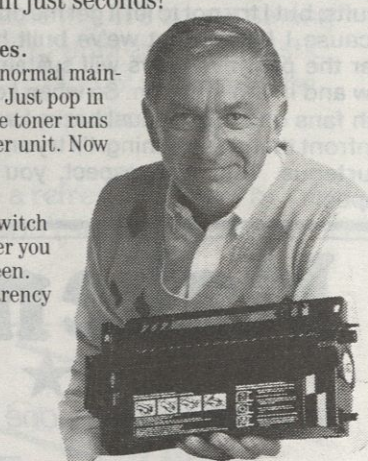
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Dennis Johnson Fills Many Gaps for Celtics

One Versatile Veteran

By Bob Schron

Dennis Johnson is sitting on the stage at Hellenic College, surveying the action out on the practice court. It's a cross-section of men and careers, ranging from the spirited hopefulness of Reggie Lewis to the grim resolve of Bill Walton, men at different ends of the athletic spectrum. Practice has officially ended. The scrimmage is an optional exercise, and assistant coach and former off-guard Chris Ford is playing. Ford steals an inbound pass and heads for the basket. DUNK! —Johnson cries out, and his booming voice fills the gymnasium, appropriate for a man of his stature.

The point guard and floor leader of a team that's won two championships in four years, Johnson remains among the most respected players in the game. He is an eleven-year veteran, and for years guards around the NBA chased the younger Johnson around the perimeter and in the transition game. Now, Johnson himself does the thankless pursuing. His battles with men such as Magic Johnson and Sidney Moncrief were one thing; now there are other problems such as the prodigious Michael Jordan, Clyde Drexler, Alvin Robertson, Mark Jackson. "Oh, Dennis is definitely still very much among the best," Jordan reflected this season.

"What you notice," Drexler mused in Boston last month, "is when he's out of the game. Then you're able to get around the court that much easier."

"I've realized something about the game over the past three or four years," Johnson says. "We've had a great deal of success in Boston, and it goes beyond winning a game or losing one. What's been a tribute to this team is the consistency and longevity of the group involved. That's what makes you keep trying to play a perfect game: you owe something to your teammates and to the fans."

I've heard a lot of criticism this year, and sometimes I feel badly, because I understand the fans are the biggest worriers. I'm like every player: I like to hear the cheers. I try to play well so I don't have to hear the booing. It's that much more difficult when you hear insults; but I try not to let it get me down, because I know what we've built here over the past five years will sustain us now and in the long run. So when I deal with fans on an individual basis, I won't confront them or anything. I'll try and be courteous. You give respect, you get respect.

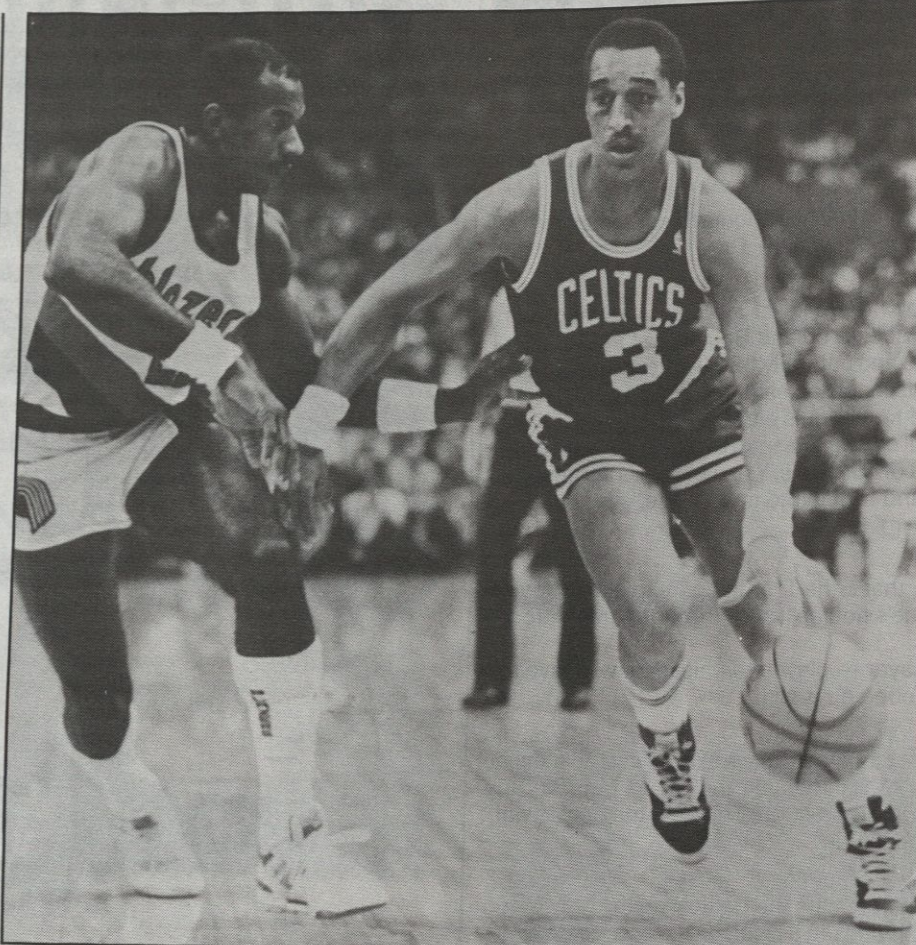
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Dennis Johnson: Adapted to Many Roles

"I continue to have fun playing (when that stops I'll get out). Especially with this team. We are mature enough to know that no one man is going to win every game for you, and when we lose we're intelligent enough to know that we need to accept responsibility in defeat. There isn't a problem with attitude on this team. "As for myself, I know this hasn't been my best of years. I've had eleven strong years. I've had one bad season. To fight through this is a matter of telling myself there's a struggle, but pride carries me through. I may not be able to get everything done this year, but I'm working. If I can't shoot straight, well, I'll be pushing the ball up the floor and getting into my game defensively. Again, there is a responsibility to the fans: their entertainment and their investment of time and concern."

"I'm not at all certain the media understands just what I accomplish for the team. Taking over the point guard role

has meant a lot of change over the years. It's a full commitment, something that's evolved totally since I've been in Boston. In Seattle at the beginning of my career, I was a pure number two guard. Then, when I went over to Phoenix, I took over more of the ballhandling responsibility when Walter Davis moved from small forward to the off-guard. When I was traded to Boston, Gerald Henderson and I split the role at first, but now, I do most of that myself.

"I just look at it this way: my role is to set players up, pass the ball and be aware of who's shooting when, how many times and from where. This year has been a season of change. As this team's point guard, I have to know that Danny (Ainge) has become a more integral part of the offense, so I'm looking for him more on the wing. This meant a change when Kevin McHale came back from his injury, because I want to get the ball in Kevin's hands several times early in a game. Our offensive strength has always been rooted from the inside."

"I know that Robert Parish will only get between 10 and 15 shots a game. He just isn't that concerned about the number of shots because winning is his priority. It isn't an individual concern for him, but we still need for him to be active."

"With Larry Bird it's a priority to get him going, but more importantly, I know his character and concentration at the end of games: Larry will take (and make) the big shot and, from a technical perspective, he'll do it by driving, posting up or shooting it from the outside."

"I don't personally care too much about scoring. It isn't an ego thing for me any more, even though it mattered when I was younger. My offense will

always be there. There are enough scorers on this team. I concentrate on defense, rebounding, assists and trying to master the point."

Mastering the point is something that has cost Johnson his offense. The standing commentary among the sportswriters in Boston is that DJ doesn't really become involved unless the game is meaningful or when the game is on the line. Johnson himself commented that his shooting is "atrocious." But according to long-time friend M.L. Carr, Johnson's missing offense is directly due to his commitment to the point. "Too unselfish," is how Carr describes Dennis. "I think DJ turns down too many shots, and it's almost reached the limit. He looks to pass instead of shoot, and it's become a habit."

There was a portrait of irony that day in the gym at Hellenic. There was Johnson, laughing with the guys at practice. The veteran is still involved, but unable to stoke the competitive fires every night now, as the seasons past outnumber the years remaining.

Johnson is a certified Big Game Player. He was the 1979 Playoff MVP. His shoulder problems originated in the 1984 playoffs against New York, but he combined with Bird to put the Knicks away in Game Seven that year and then, he climaxed that first Boston title by playing Game Seven against the Lakers with a broken hand. Last year he was the team's best player against the Lakers. He remains the key to the Celtics' attack in two ways. Johnson is the stopper against Magic Johnson, Jordan, Ronnie Harper.

On offense, production from players such as Bird, McHale and Ainge is a given. But so is Johnson's offense; in order for Boston to win Johnson must be leading, pushing the ball up, playing off the ball some when Dirk Minniefield is playing alongside, and ascertaining that the Celtics are playing a patient, intelligent game with the ball. K.C. Jones understands this. The coach of the team is constantly praising Johnson to the press, because he knows that without a big effort from Dennis the team will not win.

In recent weeks, Johnson's game has picked up considerably. Jordan torched him for 50 in Chicago recently in the first of back-to-back games, but in the return match two days later in the Garden, Johnson took the ball through the heart of the Bulls' defense and drew Michael into foul trouble. The Celtics won, perhaps symbolically, 137-107.

Dennis was ducking the press at mid-season, describing himself as a "recluse" to this publication. Likely a superstar doing some self-examination as money time approaches. This is a veteran team, a team that is able to have spokesman Kevin McHale tell the media that "championships are won this time of the year, when there are 20 games remaining. That's when teams begin to peak." McHale may have been describing Johnson, whose subtle contributions also peak toward the end of the regular season.

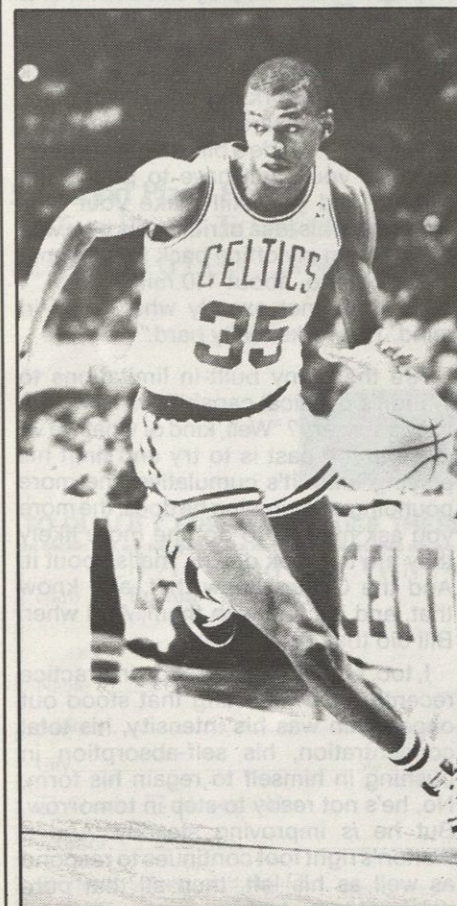
After the Celts were eliminated by the Lakers in Los Angeles last June, Johnson, who scored 33 in that game, was tearful, yet energized. He wanted to continue playing, fatigued, embattled. In perhaps the most difficult game for the Celtics since Johnson joined them in 1983, Dennis had been the best performer on the court.

Last June, when the college draft was underway, and as the Celtics' choice drew closer in the first round, there was some eerie speculation that Boston, despite their low drafting position, might still obtain the player they wanted. Some thought that player was Dallas Comegys, the 6'10" forward/center from DePaul. Comegys, a surprisingly quick, rangy player for his size, had come off a strong senior season, averaging 17.5 ppg and 8 rebounds per contest. Atlanta sensed this and in the slot before Boston's selected Comegys. (Later, Stan Kasten, the Hawks' GM, reportedly confided a motivating factor in his choice was that Boston wanted Dallas). Boston was left to select the "best player available," a time-honored athlete, and from most indications, their choice has proved to be a correct one.

Reggie Lewis, the 6'6" guard from Northeastern, in Boston, has spent a difficult season on the Celtics' bench this year. In 43 games through March 22, Lewis was averaging 4.7 ppg in 363 minutes of playing time. Lewis is shooting .472 from the field and .691 from the free throw line. He's pulled down 130 rebounds and has 60 assists. Most of his minutes have come during mop-up duty, especially since the made moves during the middle of the year to acquire Dirk Minniefield and Jim Paxson.

In the days leading up to the opening Rookie Camp last September, Lewis' coach, Karl Fogel, insisted that Lewis help the Celtics, that if they were looking for a player who will help them in all kinds of talent and in character, they drafted the right man in Reggie.

"The guys have been great here," Lewis commented last week after practice at Garden. "I came in here and I didn't know to expect. What's made the transition is the willing acceptance of me from such as Larry Bird, Kevin McHale and Johnson. The atmosphere is great, a lot



Reggie Lewis: Working on Ballhandling

Educating Reggie

1987's First Round Draft Choice Revisited

joking."

Lewis was asked if he was upset about lack of playing time. "I'm happy with the things have gone. I can develop slowly. I know that I have to keep working hard. You just need patience, and that is something I have a lot of."

"What I've found is that I need to work the basic guard skills, and it's starting to come. I've been working with Dirk Minniefield on that. Another thing I've worked on is learning to relax. I've had a tendency to press on in before seeing what the best thing to do is on offense. I've had to learn to step back

see what develops, and then slow down and not be too anxious."

"The players I've watched the most from the bench have been my teammates. Particularly Larry Bird, Dennis Johnson and Danny Ainge. I respect Larry's smartness, the way he thinks things through, whether he moves or makes a head-and-shoulders fake to get free. I watch Dennis' defense, the way he uses his guile and hands — he's not that quick, but he moves his feet very well. Also Kevin, the way he posts up, fakes and then spins off of his defensive man to get a layup. Most specifically, I'll watch the player who I'll likely

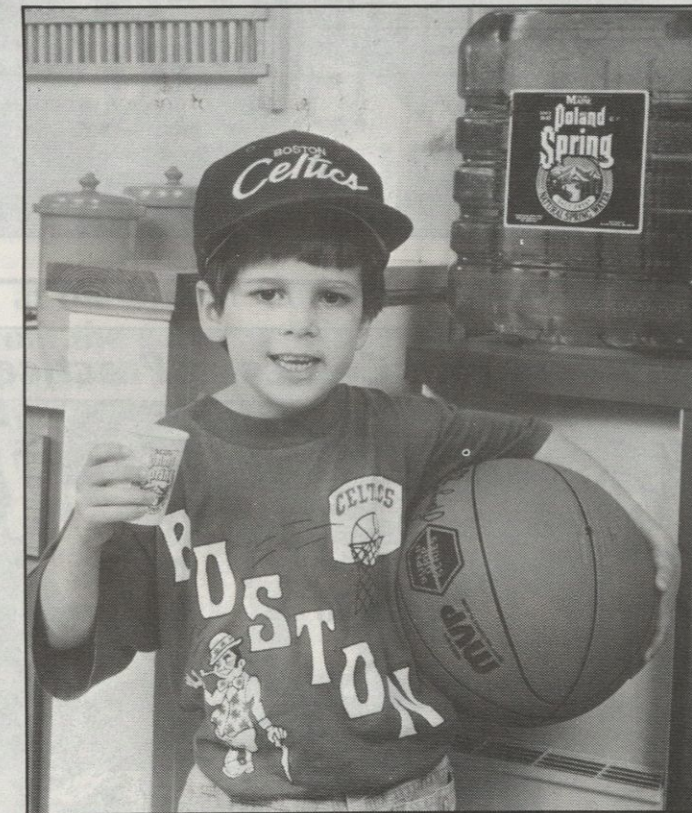
sub for. I'll want to know what his man is doing and what I'll have to do to stop him."

Lewis' favorite NBA city to date: Houston. "I've had a good time this season. I've gone out with younger guys I got to meet during the summer, players from other teams like Mark Jackson (New York), Greg Anderson (San Antonio), Scottie Pippen (Chicago), David Wingate (Philadelphia), Tyrone Bogues (Washington) and Reggie Williams (Clippers). So it's been a good year."

At the end of the long rookie road, what is the Celtics' first round choice looking forward to? "The Celtics Cruise," Lewis answered. "That's something I've heard a lot about."

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Going the Extra Mile (Step by Step)

For Bill Walton, the Key Word is Determination

By Jan Wrotnowski

No matter what the circumstances, one thing is certain. When Bill Walton steps onto a basketball court, you'll always see the same thing: a determined man, a very determined, committed individual. Realistic or not, we've come to expect this kind of effort from a player of Walton's ability and heart. But let's face it, it's almost amazing that any person could come back (or even try to come back) from so many career-threatening setbacks.

As you know, right now as the Celtics head into post-season, Bill is working himself back into playing shape again. And again is the key word here. For Bill (and Celtics fans) have certainly been through this before. Yet Bill is determined. And that's important, because mental toughness is always half the battle, right?

But just how far back does Bill have to come? And what kind of effort and courage is it going to take for Bill to begin making an active, on-court contribution? To get some answers, I spoke with Bill Walton's surgeon and long-time friend, Dr. Tony Daly.

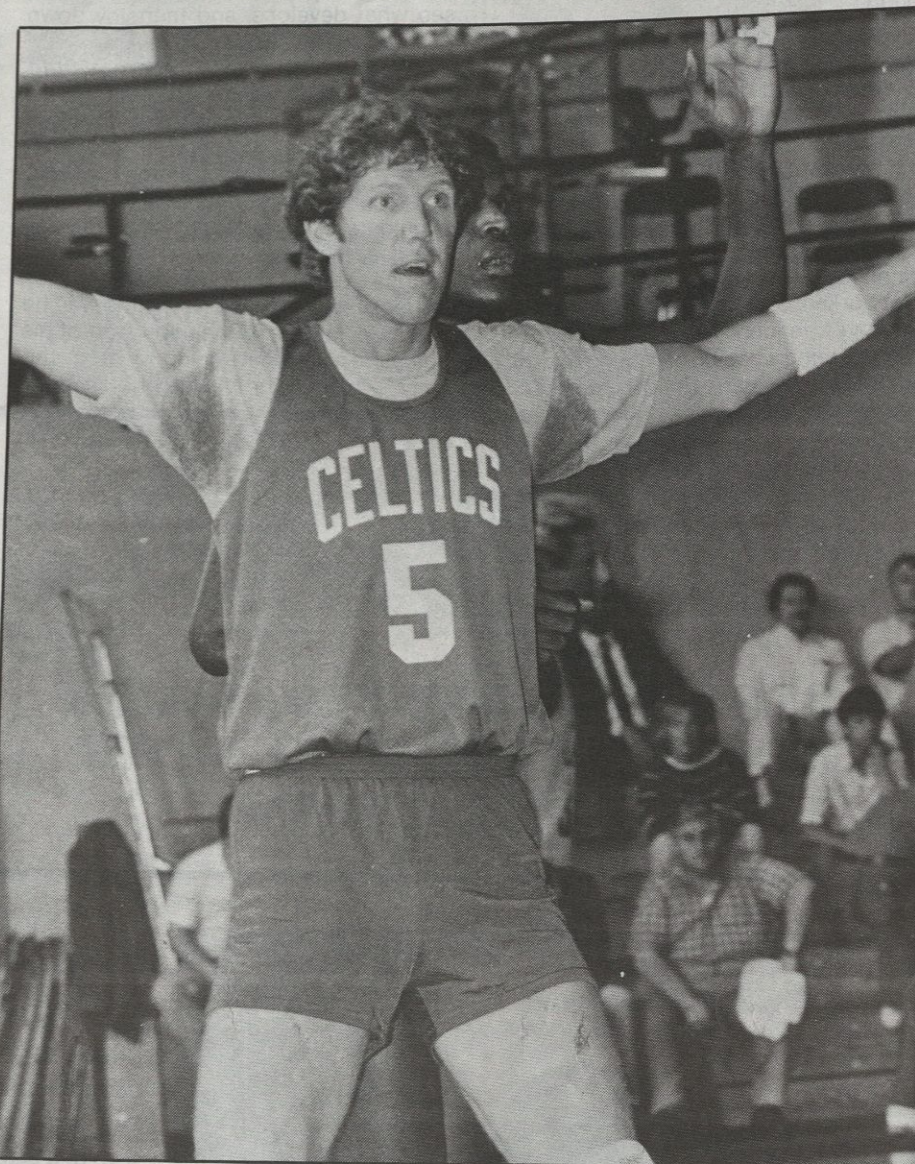
Bill Walton was blessed with great basketball ability and superior mental and emotional skills to play the game. However, he was not blessed with ideal basketball feet. Bill's God-given feet had very high arches, and as such they were not very good shock absorbers for all the stress he's been putting on them over the years. And thus the anatomy of Bill's feet, coupled with all the pounding he's inflicted on them, led to a recurring problem with stress fractures, a problem that has resulted in Walton's missing whole seasons in the past.

Yet Bill has always remained determined. He's never given up. He's always been willing to go that extra mile, endure the pain, take a few risks in the hope of finding a way that could give him another chance to do what he does best.

So after years of pain and frustration, in 1981 Walton allowed Dr. Tony Daly, with Dr. William Wagner, to reconstruct his left foot. Without that reconstruction, it's doubtful that Bill ever would have been able to play such a pivotal role in the Celtics' championship victory in '85-'86. The choice of surgery has proven to be an extremely wise decision.

However, both of Bill's feet had high arches. So it could have been expected that it really was only a matter of time before the right foot would demand attention. And that time came last season, a season certainly of disappointment and discouragement for Bill Walton. Yet there was hope. Walton's reconstructed left foot has continued to progress so nicely. So it's not surprising that Bill decided to take a chance and go under the knife again. Then he'd have more of a matching set anyway.

Last July Bill put his injured right foot under the steady had of Dr. Daly. Daly's purpose was to "try to flatten Bill's foot and give him a little more motion below the ankle, so that he could then absorb shock better... You remove bone here



Bill Walton: Better and Better

WEEI Sponsors Join Celtics at Practice



WEEI Visitors Enjoy Celtics Hospitality

A special group of visitors joined the Celtics at their practice on Tuesday, March 22nd. WEEI Radio, the radio home of the Celtics, brought 400 of their advertisers and representatives from their 55 network affiliate stations to Boston Garden to view the team's practice. Michael Wheeler, WEEI's Station Manager, and Ralph Guarino, President of WEEI, then hosted a luncheon in the Blades and Boards Club, where they presented special gifts to their guests. After practice, the luminaries were joined for lunch by the entire Celtics team, coaching staff and front office.

and there so you can alter the mechanics." Daly made incisions in Bill's right foot, each one longer than four inches. The he proceeded to sculpt the skeletal structure of the foot, removing, shaving or angling some of the bone.

With surgery complete, the long recovery process was begun. Under Dr. Daly's watchful eye, Walton has been helped to rein his desire, his impatience, his tendency to push himself too hard, too fast. After the initial rest and recovery period, Dr. Daly instituted this rehabilitation program: "We worked on trying to get the motion back. And then we got him used to pounding. He was running on the beach. We usually progress from a trampoline to the beach to grass to a hard surface. So we keep increasing the surface pressure. Running on sand, the sand absorbs all the shock. None of the force comes back to you. The sand just pushes out of the way. Versus running in the street (or on a basketball court) where you have to absorb all the shock. And so we graduated from swimming (water) to sand to grass to hard surface. That's where we are now."

Walton checks in with Dr. Daly on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. He monitors his own condition, an assignment for which he's very well-prepared after years of self-study and self-care. Dr. Daly reports: "Bill's doing real well now. I talked to him Tuesday (March 22nd). No stiffness. He's actually doing pretty good. He's building up, building up. But we don't want him to go one step forward, two steps backwards. We want a steady plane of better and better and better and better."

And Dr. Daly does definitely have hopes that Bill will play this season. As he relates: "Bill is a very determined person. His work ethic is always there, always so strong. He'll work and work and work and work. I've been taking care of him for ten years now. A while back I advised him to ride a bike to get strength because you don't have to pound the ground and you still make your legs work. Well, his idea of riding his bike was to ride from my office back to his home in San Diego, about 110 miles! 'Well,' I said, 'that's not exactly what I had in mind.' He works really hard."

Are there any built-in limitations to Walton's physical capabilities now, due to this surgery? "Well, kind of what we've done in the past is to try and limit his playing time. It's cumulative; the more pounding and jumping he does, the more you ask his feet to do, the more likely they are to break down. That's about it. And the Celtics knew that, and know that, and it's fine with them. And when Bill did that, he did fine."

I, too, observed Bill Walton in practice recently. And the thing that stood out once again was his intensity, his total concentration, his self-absorption in pushing in himself to regain his form. No, he's not ready to step in tomorrow. But he is improving steadily. And if Walton's right foot continues to respond as well as his left, then all that pure determination and courage and desire just might pay off again.

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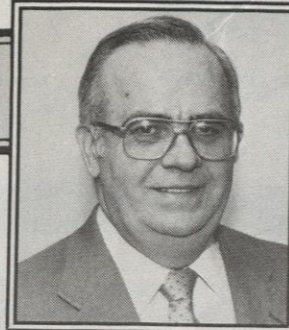
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COURTSIDE VIEW

By Eddie Gillyooly

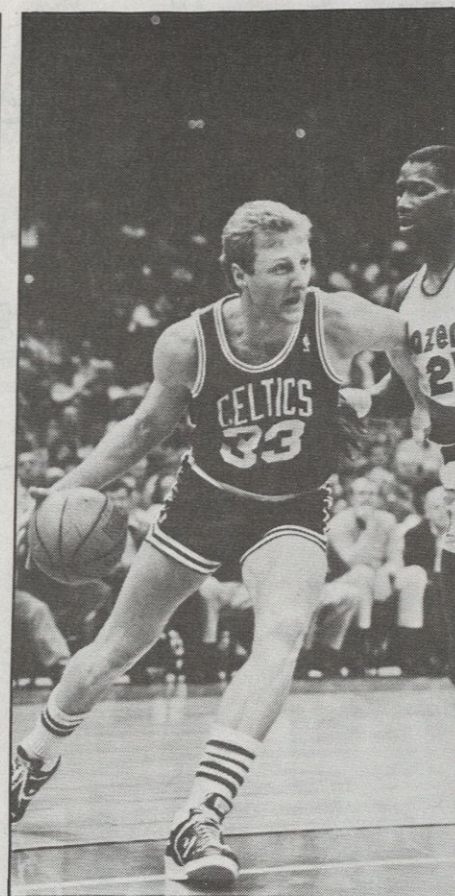
Hanging Tough

It's amazing, it really is, when you consider the team's disruptive injury toll and the multitude of personnel changes they have had to overcome — but through the first 65 games the Celtics have posted numbers almost identical to the streaking Los Angeles Lakers.

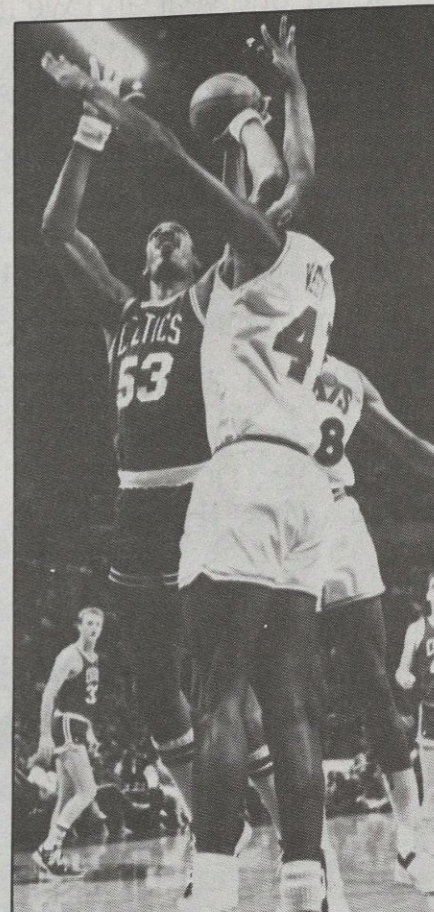
The widest gap between the East-West arch-rivals, who many believe will be matched for the fourth time in five years in the NBA's championship series, is in the loss column and that gap has been closing rapidly in recent weeks.

With six new players on the bench since last season, three in the last few months, and at least one starter sidelined with an injury for 30 of the 65 games, the Celts are shoulder-to-shoulder with the Lakers, who some claimed recently were playing at a level above everyone else in the league.

The numbers achieved by the Celtics



Larry Bird: Pride in Competition



Artis Gilmore: Quality Minutes

are further evidence that Larry Bird should be the clear cut choice this season for the league's Most Valuable Player Award. The Celtics sensation is having his greatest season and has taken his team to the top once again despite the many obstacles.

The following is a per-game comparison of the Celtics-Lakers over the first 65 games:

	Celtics	Lakers
Points scored	113.9	112.6
Points allowed	107.8	106.1
Point differential	6.1	6.5
Field Goal Pct.	.518	.502
Free Throws	28.4	30.2
Free Throw Pct.	.797	.797
Offensive Rebounds	11.6	13.1
Defensive Rebounds	30.3	30.6
Total Rebounds	41.9	43.7
Turnovers	16.1	16.1
Turnovers Forced	14.4	15.4
Steals	7.5	8.0
Blocks	5.3	4.8
Assists	29.7	28.0

Portland is averaging more points per game (115.2) than the Celtics and Lakers, but the perennial championship series rivals are the only two teams in the NBA shooting better than 50% from the field. Detroit is third at .491. The Trail Blazers are shooting .485.

There is a marked difference between the Celtics and Lakers in three pointers. The Celtics lead the league with .387 percent, making 211 of 544 while the Lakers are hitting three pointers at a .306 clip (120 of 392).

The Celtics have been held under 100 points only six times while the Lakers have scored less than 100 points eight times. On the other side of the ledger, the Celtics have held the opposition

under 100 points 16 times as compared to 18 times for the Lakers.

In overtime games, the Celtics have 2-0 while the Lakers are 2-3. In games that have been decided by three points or less, the Celtics are 8-2 and the Lakers 8-5. In games won or lost by 10 points or more, the Celts are 26-11 and the Lakers 25-5.

During this span of 65 games, Celtics starters have missed a total of 30 games while the Lakers starters missed 11. The breakdown is Kevin McHale (17), Robert Parish (5), Larry Bird (4), Dennis Johnson (3) and Danny Ainge (1). The Lakers' casualty list shows James Worthy (5), Magic Johnson (5) and Kareem Abdul Jabbar (1).

With six new players on the bench since last season, three in the last few months, and at least one starter sidelined with an injury for 30 of the 65 games, the Celts are shoulder-to-shoulder with the Lakers, who some claimed recently were playing at a level above everyone else.

Even if you include the injuries to the Lakers sixth and seventh players — Michael Cooper (15) and Mychal Thompson (2) — they are still less than the Celtics.

All things considered, the Celtics and Lakers are pretty equal. And the way the Celtics bench is starting to develop with the acquisitions of Jim Paxson and Artis Gilmore along with the possible return of Bill Walton and the contributions of Mark Acres, Dirk Minniefield and Brad Lohaus, they appear even stronger down the stretch.

Speaking of injuries, the Seattle SuperSonics, Chicago Bulls and surprisingly, the New York Knicks, have been the most fortunate. Xavier McDaniel is the only Sonics starter to lose time to injury. He sat out three games. Of the Bulls starters, Dave Corzine missed two and John Paxson one.

The Knicks, who have been riddled with injuries for the past few years, have proven to be one of the healthiest teams in the league this season. Of their top seven scorers, John Newman is the only player to miss any games. He sat out five.

Detroit has also had a successful season with injuries. Five of their top eight players have not missed a game. They are Joe Dumars, Bill Laimbeer, Vin Johnson, Dennis Rodman and John Salley. Adrian Dantley missed 12, Rick Mahorn seven and Isiah Thomas one.

Another is Indiana. The Pacers top eight scorers have missed only 20 games. Chuck Person missed three, Wayne Tisdale two, Steve Stipanovich two, Herb Williams seven and Ron Anderson six.

Aside from the Celtics, the team that has suffered the most as far as front line players are concerned, is Portland.

The Pacers lost center Sam Bowie for the season. Center Steve Johnson missed 27 games and Kiki Vandeweghe missed 40.

CELTICS PERSPECTIVE

What Are Some of Your NCAA Memories?

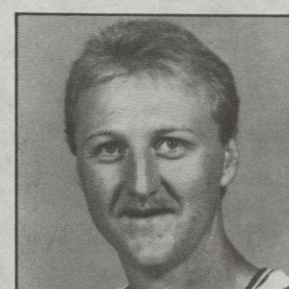
This is the most exciting time of the year for basketball fans. The NCAA Tournament has expanded to sixty-four teams, resembling the open tournament concept espoused by Bill Packer (*Celtics Pride*, April, 1988); it's a 'one loss and out' situation and it brings out the best in young basketball teams and their veteran coaches. *Celtics Pride* queried several of the best players in the sport about their views of their own experiences in the tournament.

Bill Walton (UCLA, 1974): The games in the NCAA Tournament capped off everything I did all year. The tournament games were great for a number of reasons: the challenge, the excitement, the fact that we always went into the tournament feeling we had a great chance to win the championship. For a player these factors are reasons you want to go out and play basketball. I had some great memories: winning the first championship against Florida State, and then repeating it in St. Louis the following season against Memphis State. The intensity of those games is a special memory.



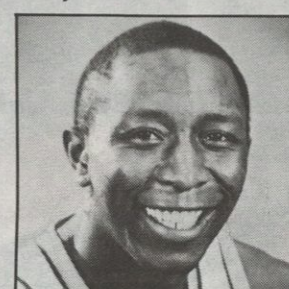
Bill Walton

Larry Bird (Indiana State, 1979): I remember the tournament for its competitiveness and the challenges that were put before us each step of the way. I knew our team could play with a lot of teams that were getting all of the publicity all season. I also had a lot of respect for Michigan State; I had seen them play early in the year, and thought all along they were the team to beat in the finals. But the further we went along, the more of a shot I thought we had. Making it that far, for our team, and nearly having an unbeaten season, was a tremendous accomplishment, though.



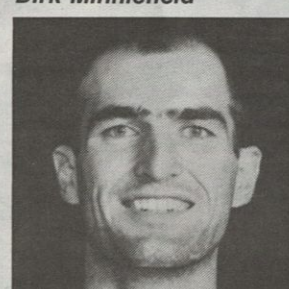
Larry Bird

Dirk Minniefield (University of Kentucky, 1983): "The Game" featured the first meeting between Kentucky and Louisville in over 25 years. It was a game that would make history. There was a lot of pressure, and it was something we just didn't talk about much. They had a bunch of great players — guys like Rodney McCray, Scooter McCray, Milt Wagner, Billy Thompson and Charles Jones. We had Mel Turpin, Derrick Hord, Charles Hurt, Jim Masters, Kenny Walker and myself. It was one of the best games I ever played as a point guard in school. I knew when to slow it down and when to run the ball up the floor. They beat us in overtime, though, after we led virtually the entire way. We were up four and then we made a rash of turnovers and fell behind. Jim Masters sent the game into OT at the buzzer, but they won it going away.



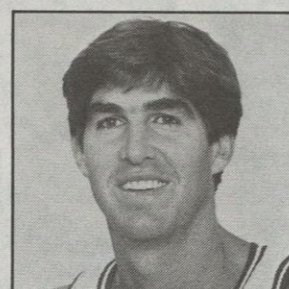
Dirk Minniefield

Fred Roberts (Brigham Young, 1982): The most vivid memory was going to the final eight in my junior season and how much fun that was. It was a matter of publicity, too; the more you won, the more people noticed you. I think our team came together when we swamped UCLA in the first round that year. We just kept believing we could go out and get the job done and it worked out. Until we reached the regional finals against Virginia and Ralph Sampson. Then we stopped doing the things that made us successful and they took it away from us.



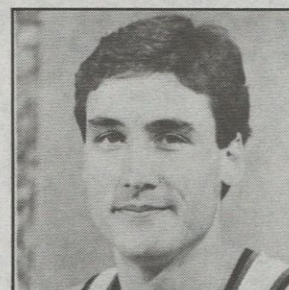
Fred Roberts

Mark Acres (Oral Roberts, 1985): It was a great time, because of the enthusiasm and excitement. Everything that led up to the beginning of the tournament made it an exciting time; the publicity, etc., made it good, fun ball. Because of the intensity! We only went to the first round, losing a close game to Memphis State at Memphis State. They had a great team, including Keith Lee, William Bedford, Baskerville Holmes and Andre Turner. But we still almost won. We would have, with a couple of breaks.

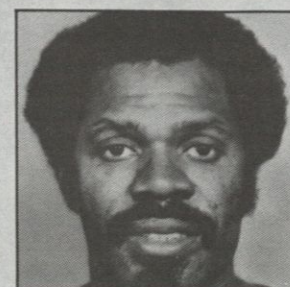


Mark Acres

Jim Paxson (Dayton, 1979): We never made it to the tournament — the selection was more limited when I was playing at Dayton, and we were one of four major independents competing for at-large bids. I didn't really think, given the criteria of selection . . . We were in competition with Notre Dame (Kelly Tripucka, Bill Laimbeer), DePaul (Dave Corzine, Mark Aguirre) and also Marquette (Boo Ellis). We were among the top four, but we could never crash into the top level. That's not a knock on our program, rather an indication of how competitive the independents were at that time.

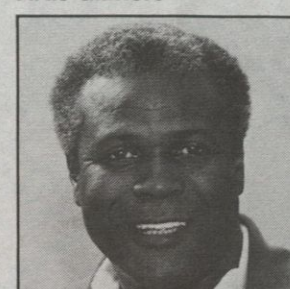


Jim Paxson



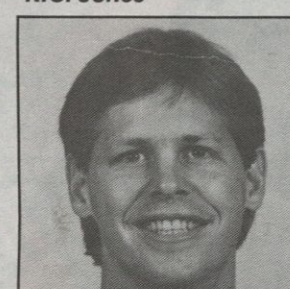
Artis Gilmore

Artis Gilmore (Jacksonville, 1971): The tournament was a unique and exciting time, very memorable. It was truly exciting going to the Final Four, and we never stopped playing well until we reached the final game against UCLA. I think we played so well because no one expected us to go that far. But I think we finally realized what we were up against (UCLA then being a dynasty). It finally went through our minds that we might be overmatched. We lost our rhythm and our timing in that final game.



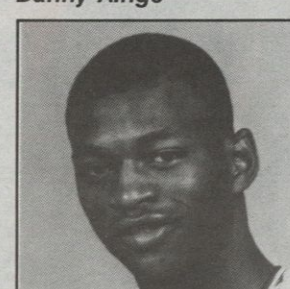
K.C. Jones

K.C. Jones (University of San Francisco, 1955): The tournament of us. We had played nearly two seasons (at USF) had hadn't even lost a game. We got there and stayed there. What impressed me about the tournament originally was the bigness of it. But even that didn't disturb our confidence. It was very comparable to when we played in the finals of the Holiday Festival; we were playing UCLA in the finals and it happened that the two teams ate their pre-game meal in the same room. The difference in the two teams! We were sitting over there laughing and having fun — not laughing at them or wooing, but just enjoying ourselves — they were sitting together close-mouthed, tense. We went on to beat them pretty easily, and I really believe we won that game at the pre-game meal.



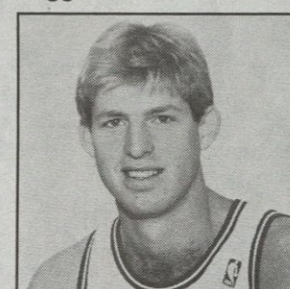
Danny Ainge

Danny Ainge (Brigham Young, 1981): I always had a good time in the tournament — all the way from nearly making it to the Final Four to the publicity and fanfare to the individual performances. I thought my game against UCLA was one of the best I've ever played. But the most vivid memory was the game I scored 47 points against Billy Cartwright and the university of San Francisco.



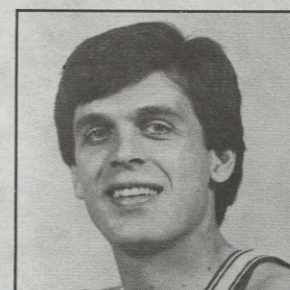
Reggie Lewis

Reggie Lewis (Northeastern, 1987): What I remember about the tournament was all of the excitement around the scene. We had our ups and downs on the floor, but never because we had doubts of our ability, of our belonging there. Everybody treated you real well in the tournament, everything from the higher quality hotel that we stayed in to the increased money we received per day — something like \$50-75 for spending. I just appreciated the opportunity to compete against the highly ranked teams.



Brad Lohaus

Brad Lohaus (Iowa, 1987). The best time of the year! I was fortunate enough to have played in three of them and each year it was better because we went farther. Last season, of course, was the best; we had Nevada Las Vegas down but couldn't put them away. But that was the best, because we knew how close we had come to the Final Four. Making it to the Final Four genuinely has meaning, because in the NCAA, there are 280 teams in the organization, and only four play for the championship (compared to the NBA where two make it out of 23). Getting to the final eight was the highlight of my career . . . until, of course, we get to The Finals. That would be the highlight.



Kevin McHale

Kevin McHale (University of Minnesota, 1979): I didn't have the opportunity to play in the NCAAs. Our team was on probation and we were prohibited from playing in the tournament. I had no regrets; I just went out and played basketball. I looked at it for one purpose: go to school and stay eligible to play ball. There really wasn't any other reason to play basketball as an amateur, anyway. I just looked at ball as a means of having fun. That's the reason I play. Basketball was a way for me to get an excellent education at a Big Ten school.

Easter Seals Basketball Shootout Winner



Christian Larsen, Kevin McHale, Erin Garceau and Stanley Berkovitz

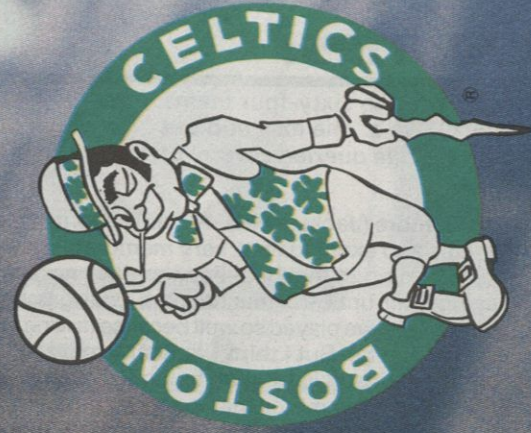
At halftime of the March 23rd game against the Washington Bullets, the Celtics honored Erin Garceau, the top fund-raiser in the 1988 Easter Seals Basketball Shootout. Erin is a fifth-grader at the Eastford Road Elementary School in Southbridge, Massachusetts, and led the more than 4,000 youngsters who participated in the program, which raised over \$120,000 for Easter Seals.

Erin shot her baskets from her wheelchair; her own disability didn't stop her from helping others.

Joining Erin in the photo above, taken during the halftime ceremonies, are Stanley Berkovitz, Vice-President of Zayre Corporation, Kevin McHale, the Honorary Chairman of the Easter Seals Basketball Shootout, and Christian Larsen, the 1988 Easter Seals child.

The Celtics are proud to be able to help Easter Seals, and we salute Erin Garceau for her efforts on their behalf.





Frank Murphy



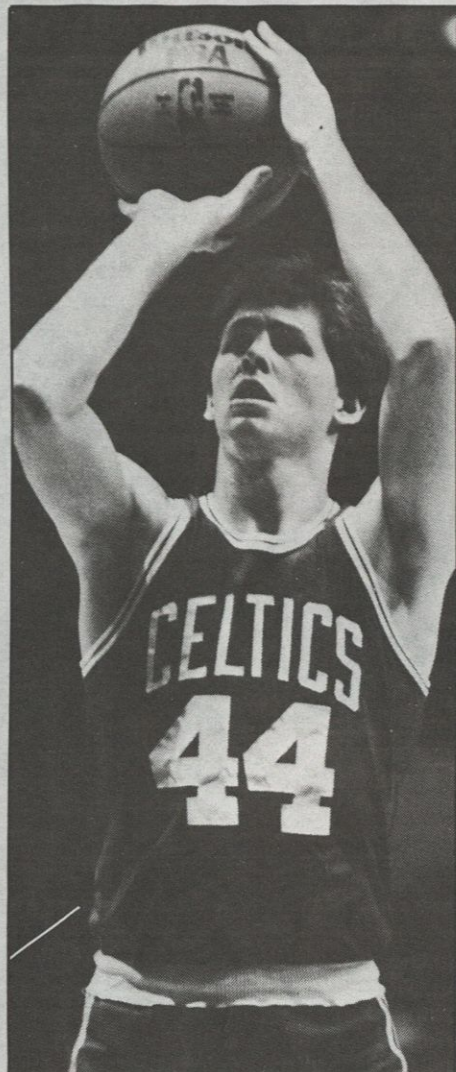
CELTICS CONFIDENTIAL

By Bob Schron

Comings and Goings. The Celtics hadn't been able to sweep the Indiana Pacers, (they being the only team in the history of the league that the Celtics haven't swept), until this season. The Celtics' 119-113 win in Indianapolis March 16th assured the Cs this feat... **Larry Bird** made a post-game appearance on Indiana television after the Cs defeated Indiana in Hartford, March 11th... **Danny Ainge** did several spots for Automatic Engineering in Lexington, outside of Boston... **Peter May**, the fine reporter from the *Hartford Courant*, was on hand as **David Halberstam** (author, most recently, of *The Reckoning*) lectured in Boston... Also on hand were **Bill and Susan Walton**... Halberstam, of course, featured Walton in his chronicle of the Portland Trail Blazers' 1978-80 season... The Celtics and WEEI with **Johnny Most**, **Glenn Ordway**, and Celtics V.P. of Marketing and Communications **Ted Rosenzweig** hosting, entertained sponsors at the Celtics' practice at the Boston Garden, March 23... The Cs scrimmage drew applause throughout, and was won by — who else — **Larry Bird**, when he in a running three-point field goal at the... **K.C. Jones** had a personal appearance when the team played Indiana at Hartford Civic Center, March 11th... Former Chicago Bull **John Block** was on hand as the Celtics played the Bulls in... **Hank Finkel** subbed for **Tommy Heinsohn** on SportsChannel that day when latter was on assignment for CBS covering the Illinois-Villanova Midwest Regional Cincinnati.

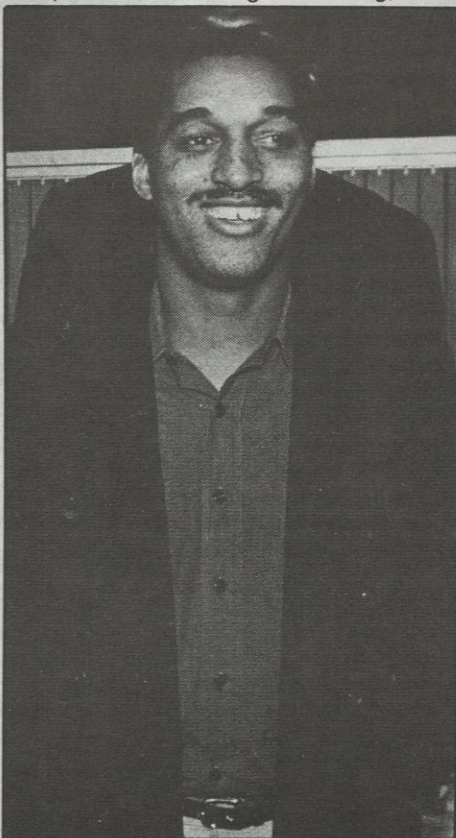
Former Celtic **Nate "Tiny" Archibald** was in town to take in the Celtics game the Bulls... Immediately, **Robert Parish** and **Danny Ainge** came over to where was seated at courtside and shook hands... Archibald is attempting to land a with one of the expansion teams in the... He's a natural at this level, in coaching, scouting or in community relations... most recently worked under his former at Texas El Paso, **Don Haskins**, who is excellent coach, but Archibald's heart in the NBA... If he had to make a move that former position under Haskins, now is the time, with the league expanding four teams in time to begin the 1989-90... **Doug Collins**, the Bulls coach, is a media favorite because of his animation, extroverted nature and his ability analyze. He pointed out to a reporter, queried him about his Bulls' 3-15 record the road after an 8-1 start: "Listen, do know who has a better record against teams, Chicago or Boston? It's us, 20-13 to 17-15. That's the barometer of greatness."

Among the fans at the Celtics' game in Indiana March 14th was former Celtic **Rick Robey**, who is in the meat-packing and restaurant business in Lexington... Others in Indiana included representatives from **Larry Bird's** Ford/Lincoln/Mercury of Martinsville, IN... Back home in the Garden, New York Jets' punter, **Dave Jennings**, a huge Celtics fan, was on hand to watch the Celtics defeat the Washington Bullets... **Kevin McHale** participated in a halftime ceremony for Easter Seals that same evening... **Wil McDonough** and **Upton Bell** of Channel Seven (McDonough also writes for *The*

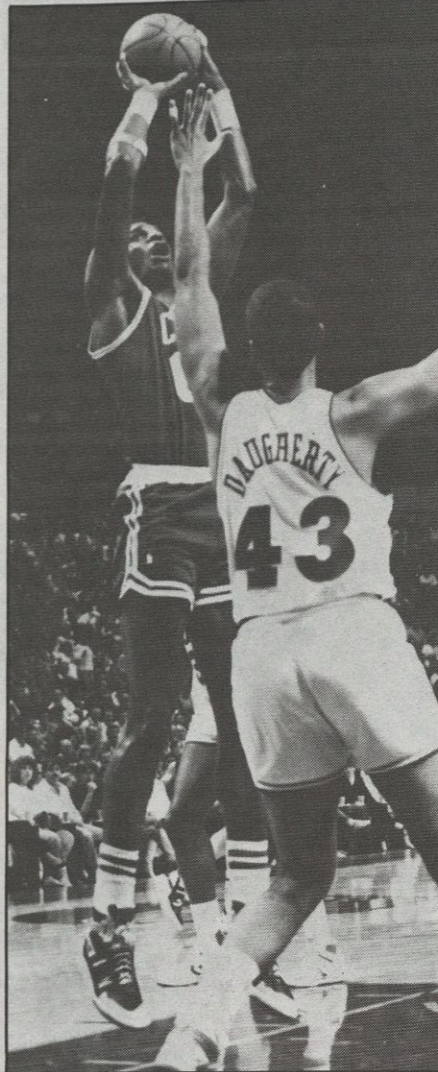


Danny Ainge: Free Throw Machine

Boston Globe and covers the NFL for CBS) offered a debate on the possibility of **Bill Walton** returning to the Celtics this season... The Redhead gamely continues his efforts to return this season, but it's continuing to be a long, hard

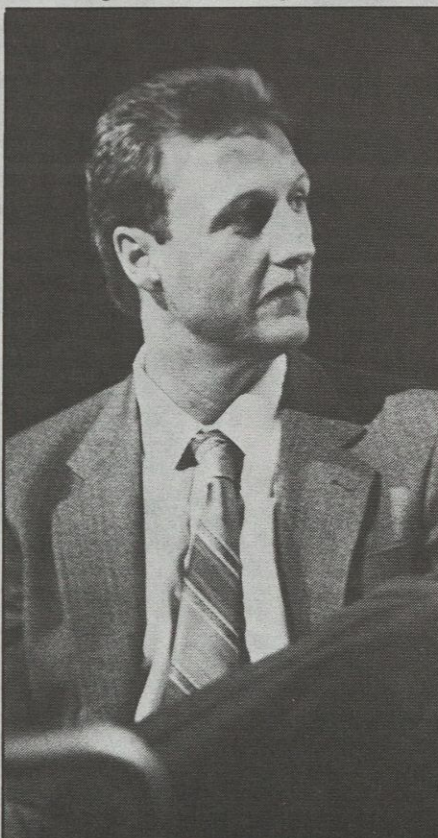


Dennis Johnson: Interested Onlooker



Robert Parish: Pumping Iron

climb... The Celtics won't be defeated in the conditioning competition as the season heads down the homestretch... **Walton, McHale, Fred Roberts, Larry Bird** and **Robert Parish** are either working the weights or running lines (wind



Larry Bird: All-Pro Businessman

sprints) after nearly every practice.

Kevin McHale on the difference between preparing for a game as a young player and as a veteran. "Two differences. One is physical; I used to be able to come to the Garden and just suit up and play. Now, with therapy and stretching, I need a minimum of an hour. Second, now I have a family and my priorities have changed. I'm no longer one-dimensional about the game."... **Danny Ainge** had his consecutive free throw streak snapped when he missed a charity toss at Indiana March 16... Assistant Coach **John Bach** of the Bulls and former head coach of the Warriors on the subtle difference that puts the Celtics among the elite. "They're a veteran team and they know how to exploit an advantage. (On March 20, Michael Jordan drew his 4th personal foul and the Celtics blew the game open). When Michael got his 4th foul, the Celtics were ahead by four points. They immediately lifted their intensity level way up and drew the lead out to ten. We couldn't ever catch up."

Wes Unseld, coach of the Bullets, alluded to preparedness as a key factor in having a chance to defeat Boston in Boston: "Look, some guys came here ready to play," Unseld commented after the Bullets were defeated 104-89 March 23. "Some guys didn't come ready. If you aren't mentally tough to play here, you won't win."... Unseld, asked if he had seen enough of **Larry Bird** after the latter scored 27 against the Bullets, snapped, "I've seen a lot of Larry, but I've seen a lot of **Dominique Wilkins** and **Karl Malone** too!"... **Nate Archibald** on the possibility of obtaining a community relations position with an NBA franchise: "I just think it's an area that needs exploring. The kids in the city identify with the players in the NBA. In some cities, they know basketball better than they know the language in the country. I just think it's an area that needs more work." **Nate Thurmond** has performed the same role with the Warriors in the past... **K.C. Jones** visited briefly with **Phil Chenier**, who played for K.C. in Washington in the mid-70s... Chenier is now a color analyst for Washington Bullets television.

Reggie Lewis on watching **Michael Jordan**: "I knew how great he was coming into the league, but I never realized how spectacular he can be when he gets it going. Everything else seems to stop in the game and he almost seems to be out there by himself. I'm just very impressed."... **Dennis Johnson** on the improved play of **Mark Acres** down the stretch: "I think that there's a period for any college player coming to the pros, where he has to get his second wind. I think college players sort of lose the wind in their sails after they play about thirty, forty games in their first year, because that's the traditional length of their college season. Then, if they're good, they'll come back. We've been impressed with Mark; he's shown he can play here, just as the coaches were saying he could as early as Pre-Season camp."

Dennis Johnson was among one of the more interested onlookers as **Paul Westphal's** Grand Canyon NAIA team played in the finals... **Craig Johnson**, the team's 5-10 point guard, is Dennis' younger brother.

Boston 117 Atlanta 100, March 13 at Boston Garden

The Celtics broke away from a brief struggle at the beginning of the game and routed the Hawks in a nationally televised encounter in Boston. After **Dominique Wilkins** connected on a 3-point field goal at the 7:02 mark of the first period, Atlanta closed the lead to 14-13. But from that juncture **Larry Bird** scored eight points and running-mate **Kevin McHale** also scored eight. Boston led after the first quarter 37-23 and proceeded to play extremely well, especially off the boards. The Celtics out-rebounded Atlanta 60-39 for the afternoon.

After playing evenly in the opening minutes of the second quarter, the Celtics placed the game in the victory column with a key 17-6 run in a 5:26 span. Boston featured the combination of **Dennis Johnson**, **Danny Ainge**, **Mark Acres**, **Bird** and **McHale** during this stretch, and the surge was highlighted by Ainge's 3-point field goal at the 3:53 mark. Ainge led the scoring for the quarter with 13 markers as Boston led 69-46 at the break.

The Hawks played without key performers **John Koncak** and **John Battle**, but it didn't appear likely that the team with the third-best record (behind Boston and Detroit) would make a run this afternoon. "It was just a combination of them playing very good and us playing very bad," commented **Mike Fratello**, the animated Hawks' coach. "They stayed with their game plan and on how they wanted to defend us." Boston showed 'help' defense against Wilkins all afternoon; the closest the Hawks would come in the final 24 minutes was the final score, long after the key Celtic figures had retired for the day. Boston led 93-70 after three quarters. The Celtics were paced by Bird with 28 points and McHale added 24 on 10 of 13 from the field. Ainge had 20, including 2 of 5 from three point distance. Wilkins led the Hawks scoring with 26 and **Kevin Willis** had 20.

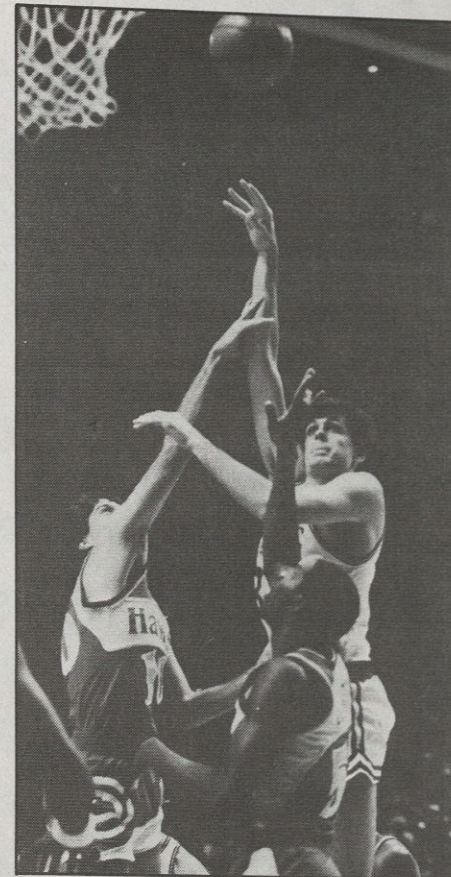
Boston 119 Indiana 113, March 15 at Market Square Arena.

Larry Bird scored 34 points and the Celtics constructed a decisive fourth quarter surge as the Celtics defeated the Pacers. With this win Boston swept the season series from Indiana. Boston also defeated the Pacers for the second time in five days, having nipped them in Hartford last Friday, 122-112 behind Bird's 30 points, **Kevin McHale's** 17 rebounds and 17 point, 10 rebound effort from rookie **Mark Acres**.

For much of this game however, it appeared the Pacers would avenge the earlier defeat. Paced by strong performances by their young frontline, including **Waymon Tisdale** (17 points), **Chuck Person** (21) and **Steve Stipanovich** (also 21), Indiana rallied from an early 18-10 deficit to sweep by Boston. Point guard **Vern Fleming** (8 assists) keyed the 20-7 Indiana run over 5:34 to keynote a 34-31 Indiana lead after the first quarter. Indiana led at halftime by matching that first quarter scoring total, 68-64.

Boston won the game by limiting the Pacers to 24 points in the third period, to lead 83-82 heading into the fourth, and then they put the Pacers away with a decisive 16-4 run early in the final period.

GAME BY GAME



Kevin McHale: 10 of 13 from the Field

Jim Paxson provided the key points in this run, tallying eight, as **K.C. Jones** shuffled Paxson in and out of the lineup down the stretch. Boston's defense forced six Indiana turnovers here as Boston finished strong.

Robert Parish supported Bird's scoring by canning 21 points and hauling in 14 rebounds. McHale had 21 points and 8 rebounds. The Pacers played this game mired in controversy; Coach **Jack Ramsay** threw Person out of practice that morning and **Stipanovich** and **Reggie Miller** fought during the team's morning shootaround.

Chicago 113 Boston 103 March 18 At Chicago Stadium

Michael Jordan scoring 50 points, the fourth time in his career he has broken the 50 mark against Boston, to key the Bulls' victory over Boston. The game was the first of a home-and-home series between the teams.

The Bulls played a very determined first half, gaining eight and ten point advantages early en route to a 32-22 first quarter lead and a 61-46 lead at halftime.

The Celtics played very loose defense, and only their six straight points in the final minute before the break could make the score respectable at halftime.

"We just weren't ready at all," commented coach **K.C. Jones**. "They beat us in every phase. Our defense," added **Larry Bird**, "was poor from start to finish."

The Bulls won this game with an aggressive effort both on the boards and in their transition game. **Chicago** out-rebounded **Boston** 54-45 (**Charles Oakley** had 12 to pace **Chicago**) and **Jordan** and ex-Celtic **Sam Vincent** continuously pushed the ball up the floor. The Celtics' best moments came late in the third quarter as the combination of **Jim Paxson**, **Dirk Minniefield**, **Artis Gilmore**, **Kevin McHale** and **Fred Roberts** rallied to cut the Bulls' margin to nine points. But **Chicago** still came away from this with a 84-72 lead after three quarters. **Jordan's** re-entry into the game early in the final stanza lifted the Bulls once more.

Jordan led all scorers on 19-32 shooting, including a 3-point FG. **Kevin McHale** paced the Celtics with 33 points and 10 rebounds and **Bird** added 10 boards. **Danny Ainge** and **Jordan** each had 9 assists.

Boston 137 Chicago 107 March 20 at Boston Garden

Larry Bird scored 33 points and **Dennis Johnson** paced the offense with 10 assists as Boston avenged its defeat in **Chicago** two nights earlier. **Michael Jordan**, the circuit's leading scorer with a 34.2 average, was held to 26 points in the contest. **Jordan** had tallied 50 in the game in **Chicago**, a 113-103 Bulls' win.

The game was tense through the first three and a half quarters as the Bulls parlayed good ball movement and a tenacious defense to stay in the contest. Boston had leads of 35-29 and 67-63 at the initial two quarter breaks.

The key moment came in the third period when **Jordan** picked up three quick personals to give him four for the game. Up until that juncture the game had been tied 11 times and there had been 10 lead changes, the final tie at 75-75 when **Jordan** shook loose on the left baseline for a soaring dunk. Two possessions later, **Jordan**, after having blocked a **Robert Parish** shot, then picked up a foul attempting to help out in the post against **Kevin McHale**. He went out immediately thereafter and, not coincidentally, the Celtics made a big move — **Danny Ainge** connected on a 3-point FG, **Johnson** on a 17-foot jump, **Ainge**

again on two more free throws. An **Artis Gilmore** FT and four points from **Kevin McHale**, sparked Boston to a lead at the end of three, 95-85, and the Celtics pulled away steadily thereafter.

Bird paced all scorers with 33 points and **McHale** added 29 with 10 rebounds. **Johnson** forced the issue all afternoon and had 10 assists. **Jordan's** scoring led the Bulls and **Charles Oakley** had 13 points and 9 rebounds.

Boston 104 Washington 89, March 23 at Boston Garden

The Celtics broke open a tight game in the fourth quarter and played their best defense of the season in upending the Washington Bullets in Boston. Since losing to the last place New Jersey Nets on March 9th in the Garden, the Celts have won eight of their last nine games.

The Bullets, who played without **Bernard King**, would bother the Celtics with a formula that worked the last time the teams met in Boston (106-100 Boston win, January 28th). Using a pressing defense keyed by rookie **Tyrone Bogue**, Washington gained a 51-48 lead at halftime after the Celtics' starters had forged a 7-point (26-19) advantage after one.

"I like when we play the type of defense that we played tonight," commented **Larry Bird** afterwards. "It just seems our offense flows easier when we're stopping them on the defensive end."

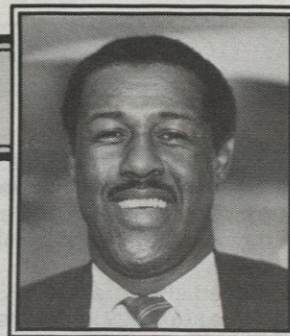
The Celtics edged out into the lead after halftime. **Bird** keyed this run midway through the third with a fast-break floater through the lane, followed by an 18-foot jumper. When he cut through the lane and received a neat feed from **Robert Parish**, the Celts led 66-61. However, the Bullets refused to fold; they weathered this surge and gained a brief lead at 71-70 on a **John Williams** lay-in and later, after the Celtics answered, they made a last-ditch stand utilizing their own effective defense. **Moses Malone**, **Jeff Malone**, **Steve Colter**, **Williams** and **Manute Bol** fashioned this run.

But Boston would surge in the final 4:45 after a Williams lay-in cut Boston's reacquired lead to 86-82. **Bird** again made the difference. After **Dennis Johnson** (8-11 FGs) lofted in a runner over **Bol**, **Bird** connected on a high-arching 3-point FG. The Celtics were off and running. Paced by **Kevin McHale's** four points, Boston outscored Washington 12-2 en route to the win. **Bird** led the Celtics with 37 points and 14 rebounds and **Parish** added 13 boards. **Williams** led Washington with 27 points.

Boston Celtics Statistics

as of March 29, 1988

WON 48, LOST 21												BOSTON CELTICS												as of March 29, 1988											
			-FIELD GOALS-					3-PT. FG		-FREE THROWS-			--REBOUNDS--																						
PLAYER	G	QS	MIN	FG	FGA	PCT	FG	FGA	FT	FTA	PCT	OFF	DEF	TOT	AST	PF	DO	STL	TO	BLK	PTS	AVG	H1												
BIRD	65	64	2556	759	1443	526	82	194	355	391	908	96	528	624	396	135	0	107	188	47	1955	30.1	49												
MCMALE	52	51	1942	465	760	612	0	273	344	794	134	311	445	124	146	1	23	113	78	1203	23.1	33													
AINGE	48	48	2543	403	839	480	122	299	127	147	864	51	162	213	428	172	1	94	131	14	1055	15.5	33												
PARISH	62	62	1949	366	625	586	0	0	158	216	731	143	395	540	93	161	5	44	133	76	890	14.4	26												
JOHNSON	66	65	2343	298	699	426	11	42	233	269	866	57	159	216	528	177	0	84	180	27	840	12.7	24												
PAXSON (TOT)	32	1	526	92	199	462	4	14	42	50	840	10	17	27	54	51	0	19	21	3	230	7.2	15												
PAXSON (BOS)	15	0	263	49	92	533	1	6	28	32	875	2	7	9	27	22	0	12	10	2	127	8.5	15												
ROBERTS	61	12	840	130	271	480	0	5	98	128	766	50	85	135	61	91	0	11	53	13	358	5.9	20												
LEWIS	42	0	363	83	176	472	0	3	38	55	691	26	29	55	26	48	0	14	28	14	204	4.7	14												
LOHMAUS	59	3	616	97	203	478	2	11	42	51	824	40	83	123	39	108	1	17	48	39	238	4.0	15												
GILMORE (TOT)	36	25	778	86	157	348	0	0	55	108	509	39	117	176	16	130	0	12	59	25	227	3.9	15												
GILMORE (BOS)	34	2	406	45	77	384	0	0	36	71	507	44	69	113	7	76	0	7	31	13	126	3.7	15												
MINNIEFIELD (TOT)	48	4	703	65	138	471	3	9	25	29	862	16	49	65	152	86	0	35	60	3	158	3.3	16												
MINNIEFIELD (BOS)	44	4	703	65	138	471	3	9	25	29	862	16	49	65	152	86	0	35	60	3	158	3.3	16												
ACRES	66	5	974	89	165	539	0	0	66	100	660	87	135	222	37	168	1	25	47	25	244	3.7	19												
CELTICS	69		16660	3025	5838		518	226	586	1556	1948	799	795	2096	2891	2063	1513	9	520	1112	364	7832	113.5	143											
OPPONENTS	69		16660	2941	6177		476	98	310	1423	1865	764	955	1863	2818	1739	1688	21	620	992	294	7405	107.3	139											



AS I SEE IT

By M.L. Carr

Zeroing In

I think at this time of the season, we are beginning to see the Celtics come together. I believe we began to see hints of their resolve when they reacted angrily to their defeat to New Jersey in Boston in early March. They were challenged by their fans and in the press; they responded by winning nine of their next ten ballgames.

The Celtics have had a great run in Boston during the past ten seasons. They have combined talent, success, experience and guile to either overpower opponents, or outfox them. I remember we defeated the 76ers early in Larry Bird's career, by simply having a great team. I say "simply"; three years later, we had to draw on will and desire to be champions when we defeated the Lakers in 1984.

As years go by, you have to continually work on your game both as a team and as an individual, if you have any desire to remain at the top. As my career came to an end in 1985, we went into those playoffs very badly injured. Yet we still made it all the way to The Finals because we had learned *how* to win. And that's because we knew from experience, that it is important for us that we do win.

I think what we've seen in Boston during the past three weeks or so is K.C. Jones and the staff becoming more demanding of the team. And quite frankly, I think the players are becoming more demanding of themselves to be ready to play. The reason is readily apparent: in the playoffs, every team *must* be taken seriously. There are no surprises in the playoffs. Teams make the post-season because they have some credentials. You have to take everyone seriously.

I read in one of the Boston dailies last week that Dennis Johnson is beginning to get his game into gear — although no surprise there, because I think Dennis is an outstanding pressure player, one of the best in the business. That's consistent with what I said above: Larry Bird, Dennis, Kevin McHale, and Robert Parish are all players who are starting to elevate their games because they've been through this so many times before. Back to that 1985 example. In my last year, we were expected to have no problem whatsoever against the Cleveland Cavs in the miniseries, but a number of misadventures immediately happened to us. We nearly lost both home games to begin the series. Larry hurt his elbow, and forced to miss Game 3, he proved to be irreplaceable as we lost (despite a great performance by Scott Wedman). We closed them out the next day when Dennis blocked World Free's shot at the buzzer, but they nearly won that series. It just gives an illustration of what happens at this time of the year.

Now, the guys are working on their intensity and concentration. These fac-



Dennis Johnson: Pressure Player

tors determine the difference at this point (This is why you see a lot of teams go out quickly in the playoffs. Inexperienced, they just don't understand that getting there isn't enough. They play as if they're just happy to have made the

playoffs and they are eliminated quickly). This is why there aren't any meaningless games at this time of the year. Again, a note of history: in our first year in Boston, we won the regular season championship and cruised through the first round

of the playoffs. But then we went into the finals of the Eastern Conference against the Philadelphia 76ers, who had made it into the championship round a few years before and were playoff-tested. We led them in the first game and then suddenly, we seemed to forget everything that made us successful all year. They made a charge at us in that first game, took the game on our floor and we were never the same the rest of the series as they defeated us 4 games to 1. There's a totally different level of focus at this time of the year, as the championship picture becomes more clearly understood by everyone involved. Your test is at hand as a team. How do you respond?

Partly, by zeroing in now. The games are important now because teams are not only jockeying for a playoff spot, they are trying to establish dominance over their opponents. The Celtics defeated the Pacers six straight times this season, so you know the Pacers are thinking (if they play in the postseason), 'Uh-oh, here they come again.'

The great thing about the Celtics is that they have a tradition of accomplishment. They know they are capable of doing what it takes to win. So they can begin working on their own game and not be concerned with what Atlanta, Detroit or even what the Lakers are doing. The key for Boston is to find their own strengths and weaknesses as a team now and build on the former and eliminate the latter. These goals drive this team.

The defeat to the Nets might have been a turning point resembling the shocking loss to the Knicks on Christmas Day two years ago. That defeat awoke the Celtics and they never took their own abilities for granted again that season. It's later now, but the Celtics' veterans understand what's necessary for victory: playing hard and concentrating during the final month of the year.

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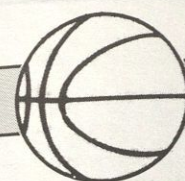
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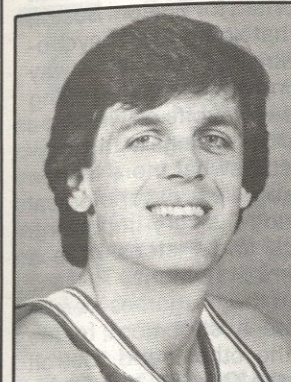
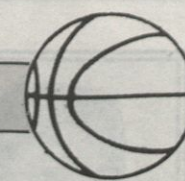
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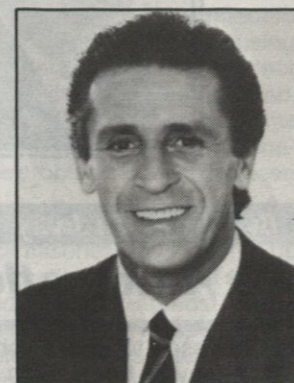
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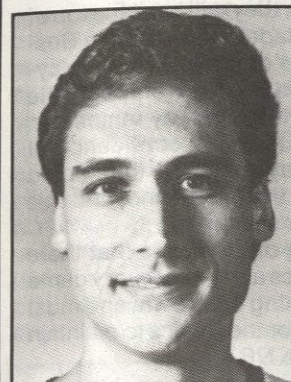
Kevin McHale

Kevin McHale on the Celtics' season: "We lose a couple of games and everybody is going to abandon ship. But in an 82-game schedule you're going to have some tough times. That West Coast trip (in February) really takes a lot out of you. You have all that travel and then you come back here and it's still snowing and you just get into the doldrums. We have to play the type of basketball that wins us championships. We know what we have to do, which is an advantage, because some teams don't know what they have to do. Sometimes it's just difficult to get everybody out there in synch at the same time."

Pat Riley assesses the difficulties his team will have in repeating if they have to play the Celtics in The Finals: "I think our team has more experience and maturity, and this has increased our resolve. But it won't be easy (to repeat). I expect to see the Celtics in The Finals. If they get Bill Walton back in the next few weeks, that will make their deal for Jim Paxson a brilliant deal. They'll have a perfect eight guys for the playoffs. That's what you need to win the championship. Eight solid guys."



Pat Riley



Jim Paxson

Jim Paxson on new teammate Larry Bird: "He makes unbelievable shots, night in and night out, but the thing that really impresses me is how much he gets beaten up. Sometimes it seems they could call a foul every time he has the ball. He has really gained my respect."

Stan Kasten on the reports that Jim Paxson, acquired by the Celtics from Portland in February, restructured his contract downward in order to fit within the Celtics' salary cap: "I am bemused, if the time has come that a player will walk away from as much as one dollar. If that's really the deal he has, then God bless him. Any player who is willing to take less money is my kind of guy."



Stan Kasten

Three-Point Explosion

Dependence on Long-Range Shooting is League-Wide

By Eddie Gilleoly

Cleveland's Mark Price is the NBA's most accurate three-point shooter, hitting 47 percent of his shots, but the Celtics' Danny Ainge-Larry Bird Combo is the most explosive in the league. Ainge hits on 41% of his three-point attempts while Bird connects on 42%.

Overall, the Celts lead the league in three-point percentage with a .387 mark. The league average is .313. The Chicago Bulls have the worst shooting percentage at .218, making only 43 of 197 attempts. The Washington Bullets have connected on only 23 of 102 for a .225 mark.

Through the first 65 games, the 23 teams have made 2264 of 7212 three-point shots. It is not a proficient number, considering it accounts for a total of 6792 points.

On the same number of shots, the shooters would have scored 7212 points if they had hit on 50% of their shots from two-point range. Statisticians claim 33% on three-pointers is equivalent to 50% of two-pointers.

However, in the case of Ainge and Bird, it is the opposite. Ainge's 116 three-pointers have totalled to 348 points. If he connected on 50% of the 281 shots from two-point range, he would have scored only 280 points. For Ainge to total 348

points on 281 shots from two-point range, he would have had to shoot 62% on those attempts.

The same is true for Bird. His 73 three-pointers have accounted for 219 points. If he made half of his 174 attempts from two-point range, he would have scored 174 points. He too would have had to shoot 62% on the 174 shots at two-point range.

Through the first 66 games, Bird and Ainge have taken 455 of the Celts 544 three-pointers. The rest of the team has hit on 25 of 99 for a 25% mark. Opponents have made only 96 of 298 attempts (32%) against the Celts.

Three-pointers have been extremely productive for the Celts accounting for 633 points on the 211 connections. Hitting 50% of the 544 shots from two-point range would have only accounted for 544 points. Too, several of the shots have won games at the buzzer while many others have enabled the Celts to overcome deficits in a hurry.

Many coaches are reluctant to endorse three-point shots because they sometimes disrupt a team's rhythm and set up the opposition for fast break layups with long rebounds.

Three-pointers are most effective for

the home team because they get the crowd excited and into the game. It has a way of demoralizing the opponent.

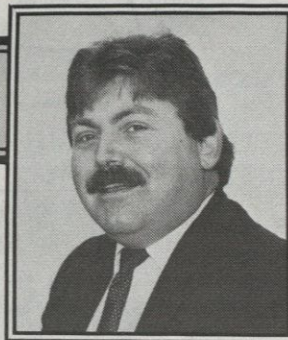
With the effective shooting the Celtics have been receiving from Ainge and Bird, the opponents cannot clog the middle as much as they have in the past. The three-

pointers have spread out the defenses.

As noted, the three-pointers aren't as effective for most teams as they have been for the Celtics. The following is a league breakdown of the three-point attempts and percentages of all the teams.

	Made	Attempted	Pct.
Boston	211	544	.387
Cleveland	101	270	.374
Seattle	188	551	.341
Indiana	131	389	.336
Denver	140	418	.334
Portland	91	273	.333
New York	123	377	.326
Utah	102	312	.326
San Antonio	102	319	.319
Milwaukee	108	338	.319
Phoenix	81	254	.318
LA Lakers	120	392	.306
Philadelphia	114	375	.304
New Jersey	103	354	.290
Sacramento	80	274	.290
Dallas	126	435	.289
Detroit	41	143	.286
Golden State	60	212	.283
Atlanta	55	198	.277
LA Clippers	70	266	.263
Houston	51	220	.231
Washington	23	102	.225
Chicago	43	197	.218





CALLING THE GAME

By Glenn Ordway

No Automatics

In losses to Philadelphia and New Jersey at the Garden this season, the Celtics have been taught a lesson that I hope they won't soon forget. Namely, that for this team, there are no automatic victories any more. This Celtics team is very different from the ones we've seen over the past couple of years. Different in that they are older, and different in that the league has gotten much better this year.

The Celtics can't just turn it on and turn it off any more. A couple of years ago they could do that, because they were much more talented than other teams. Back then, they could actually "turn it on" when they needed a win, and consequently, "turn it off" when they'd built a substantial lead on an outmanned opponent. Not only could they do this at home, but also on the road, and I think this is why we've seen a diminishment in road victories this year.

Against Philadelphia, the Celtics built up a thirty point lead, figured they had the game won, and "turned it off" in the second half. With all their switches turned off, Boston was not able to get back into the game when Philly started its run. The second half was also an exhibition of uncharacteristically dumb play on the Celtics' part. They completely stopped looking for the good shot, which is indicative of having turned off the old basketball switches. Ironically, the first half of this game might have been the best half of basketball by the Celtics this season. They were doing everything

right, McHale was en route to a triple-double, yet never got the ball in the second half.

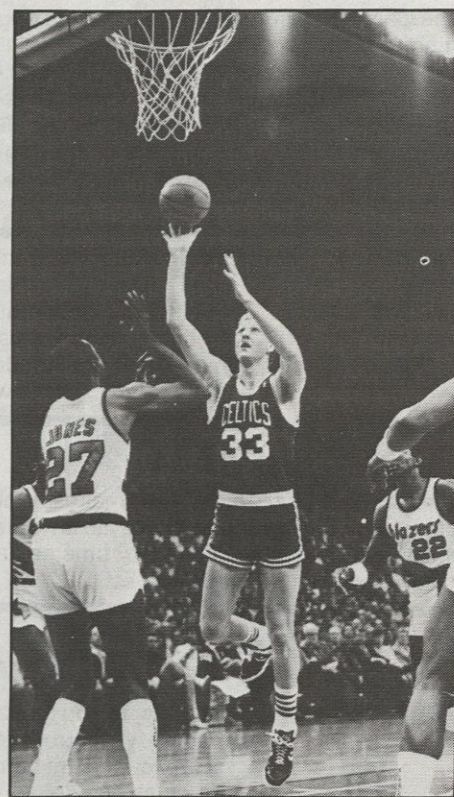
Against New Jersey, Boston seemed to figure that "Hey, this is Jersey, we can take them at the Garden, no problem, they've only won one road game all year." But it's gotten to the point now in the NBA that if you just "show up" for a game, there are enough great athletes, even on weaker teams, who can turn it on and beat you. Remember that games against the Celtics are more important to the opponent most of the time, so the team will play with a lot of fire. If you don't concentrate and put out the effort in these circumstances, you'll get beat.

The Lakers have also lost some games to "weaker" opponents late in the season, but to my way of thinking, it is directly related to injury. The games they lost found their line-up in shreds. Magic Johnson has a very difficult and slow-healing groin injury, Michael Cooper may have rushed himself back too soon, meaning their team is without a quality point guard. Having this happen would be akin to having Larry and DJ out of the line-up. The Lakers are starting to look a little vulnerable. Let's face it, they can't win the Championship without Magic Johnson, Boston can't win it without Larry Bird.

A lot has been said about the importance of building momentum for the playoffs, and generally it's very true. The Celtics have two home games left with Detroit that loom large in the remainder of the season. If the Celtics can win these games, it will probably be the difference for home court advantage in the playoffs.

Historically, the home court advantage is the key to the series between these two teams. Detroit plays totally differently at home from the way they do here; guys like Dennis Rodman will disappear in the Garden, yet go on to register double-double games in Detroit.

If Detroit could ever manage to win at Boston Garden, it could lift their confi-



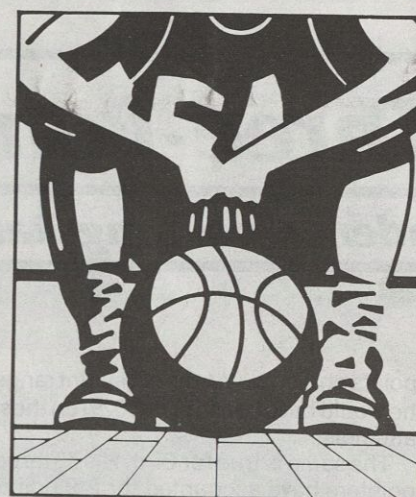
Larry Bird: Still the Key

dence that much higher, and for that reason alone, the games become that much more important for Boston. Boston needs to retain that home court psychological edge against Detroit, in this way making the Pistons anxious about having to play here in the playoffs as well.

The homecourt advantage in the playoffs is negated somewhat more than in the regular season, so a psychological and emotional edge is very important. Both the Celtics and Pistons have a chance to make a statement . . . if the Celtics win their home games versus Detroit it will be a statement to the Pistons. If, on the other hand, Detroit can win one at the Garden, it will be a statement to themselves. And that statement will be "Hey, we can win here."

Likewise, I think when Boston next plays the Sixers, they will be at the top of their game. Philadelphia might be Boston's first-round opponent in the playoffs, and I'm sure Boston won't want the last game to be the one they remember. If Philadelphia finds its confidence at the Garden, they may feel they could pull an upset in the first round, and this might save their season.

So the lesson of the day is that there are no automatics any more; every game takes on a meaning of its own, and must be hard-fought for the Celtics to maintain their edge in the NBA.



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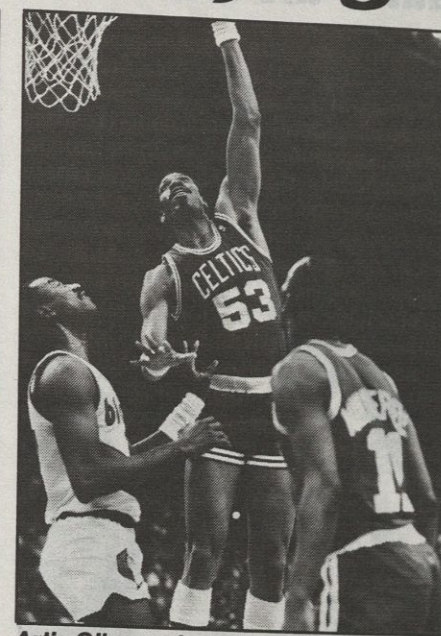
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Artis Gilmore: Learning a Hook Shot

The Celtics' acquisition of Artis Gilmore on January 8th at first appeared to be strictly an insurance measure. Gilmore's days as an effective NBA player seemed to be over; he had been released by the Chicago Bulls on Christmas Eve. His minutes had dwindled steadily from an opening night 30, and his game was extremely rusty. Yet through all of this adversity, Gilmore had two things working for him. He still believed he could play, and the Celtics' players and coaching staff felt the same way.

"Artis had been out a long time," commented K.C. Jones after Gilmore had played superbly against the Bulls recently. Gilmore, playing as if on a mission, had 9 points and 6 rebounds in 118 minutes against Chicago. "What we're seeing now is a player who has talent, and who has the desire to win a championship ring before he's through playing."

"I still like the game," Gilmore said. "I can't say enough about the Celtics organization and the way they treat their players. They're first class all the way and it makes you want to go out and play hard."

"I had some down moments in Chicago. I was very, very happy about being

traded there (Gilmore was traded to Chicago — his second stint with the Bulls — during the off-season in exchange for a second round selection in the upcoming draft.) I worked hard all summer, probably the hardest I've ever worked

and came into camp ready to help the team win. But after playing thirty minutes on opening night against Washington and holding Moses Malone to two points, I never really got off the bench again, so I was very disappointed.

"But the Celtics understand what it takes to win, and that's really the only reason to play the game. We have a good nucleus and I'm certain we're going to play well in the playoffs."

Gilmore has sparked the team on at least three different occasions recently. His 13 points and 8 rebounds were critical in the team's 124-104 getaway game in Portland during the West Coast trip on February 22. Then, he came off the bench to arouse a slumbering unit against the Clippers at home, pulling down 10 rebounds in a season-high 28 minutes. Artis was also instrumental in the contest against Chicago, a game the Celtics did not want to drop after having lost to the Bulls two nights earlier in the Chicago Stadium.

"We've been very impressed with Artis," commented Jimmy Rodgers, the Celtics' Director of Player Personnel. "He's a strong force out there and we've had the feeling he's become increasingly comfortable with the system as time has gone on."

"I think the team is headed a long way," added Bill Walton who is desperately trying to get back to the team himself before the end of the year. "Artis has helped the team coming off the bench, and so has Mark Acres."

"I'll look at matchups," commented Jones, when asked about how he's using the two men. "Mark has a special instinct for getting after the offensive rebound. He attacks it. Artis has given us some very welcome backup strength, especially with the problems Robert has been having."

The difficulties Jones was alluding to were the back miseries which kicked up on Parish during the West Coast swing. Parish pulled his back against Dallas February 12 and then nearly toppled over in Los Angeles two days later. Coincidentally, Gilmore began playing more minutes with increased effectiveness. Parish remains plagued with his back problems from time to time, and Gilmore has now had eighteen games of 10 or more minutes.

"I'm very happy to be contributing," Gilmore stated. "It's an honor to be playing with Robert Parish and I'm just working to be at a peak level for the playoffs."

Evidence of this is Gilmore's work in developing a new shot. He has been working out with Jimmy Rodgers to perfect a hook shot. This from a sixteen-year veteran.

"It's just something you have to be prepared to do," offered Artis. "The older you get, the more you have to adjust. I just think that the closer you think you are to winning (the title), the more you find yourself adding things to your game."

Celtics Fight Cystic Fibrosis



Representatives of the Celtics and Easter Seals at Halftime Raffle.

For the past three years the Celtics have participated in the 65 Roses Sports Club, a creative and unique fund-raising concept which generates funds for the Massachusetts Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Members of the 65 Roses Sports Club have gathered together in the Garden's Blades and Boards Club prior to five of the Celtics home games this season. There they enjoyed visits from Celtics players, autograph and photo sessions and close contact with members of the Celtics organization.

These get-togethers were spearheaded by the tireless efforts of Celtics assistant coach Chris Ford, whose hard work and commitment was always apparent.

The 65 Roses Sports Club, so called because of a child's mispronunciation of 'cystic fibrosis,' has generated well over \$150,000 for children who suffer with cystic fibrosis, America's number one genetic killer of children.

At halftime of the Celtics' March 25th game against the Philadelphia 76ers, the night of the final gathering of the season of the 65 Roses Club, a special halftime presentation and raffle drawing was held. In the photo above are pictured (left to right): Tod Rosensweig, Celtics Vice-President of Marketing and Communications; John Cox, Chairman of the Foundation's Sports Club with the Celtics; Chris Ford; Arthur Bourque, President of the Massachusetts Cystic Fibrosis Foundation; and Jennifer Kelley, Executive Director of the Foundation. Ford and Rosensweig accepted awards from the Foundation, and then Ford drew the name of the winner of a special raffle held during the season.

The winner of the long-awaited raffle for a seven-day Caribbean cruise with the Boston Celtics on the *Sovereign of the Seas* cruise liner, sponsored by Four Seasons Travel Service, was Rick Butrick of Brockton, Mass. - Bon Voyage, Rick!

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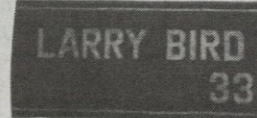
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Tourney Time

Jimmy Rodgers Evaluates the NAAs

By Bob Schron

In a far-ranging interview with *Celtics Pride*, one of the top talent eyes in the business, Jim Rodgers, Director of Player Personnel of the Celtics, gave his views on this season's NCAA Tournament, the influence said tourney has on scouting and his overall views on the college game in general.

The interview, conducted before the final sixteen teams in the NCAA began play during the next-to-last weekend of the college season, provided a hint of how the Celtics view the collegiate players, including Rodgers' view on underclassmen in the tournament.

"I think you're aware of underclassmen in the tournament but it's not really something you even consider when evaluating players in your draft plans. We scout every senior — or try to. We just think, like all NBA teams think, I would suspect — that the younger players should stay in school. We'd never suggest that a kid leave early. It's an individual decision, but I don't think the NBA should influence a player.

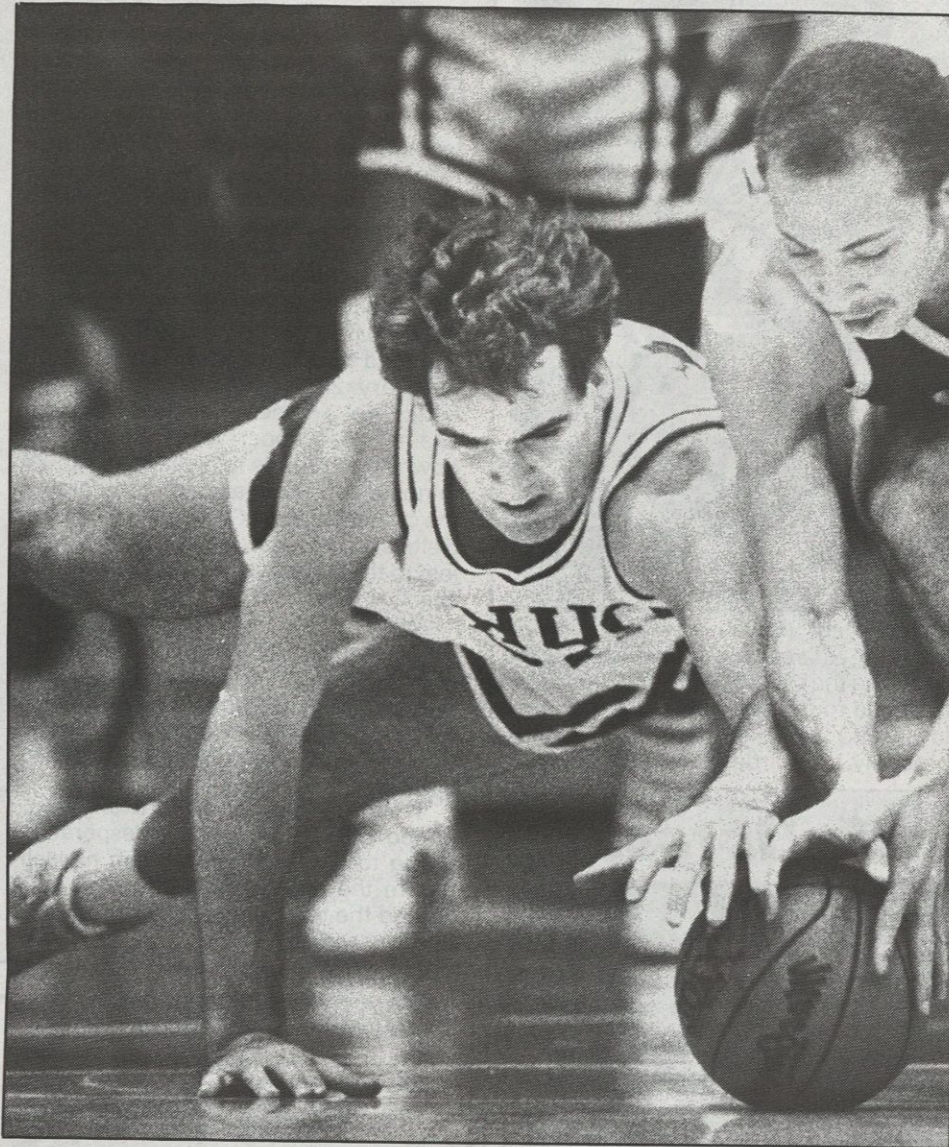
"But that's not to say that underclassmen won't influence this year's tournament. A player like Mark Macon (FR G from Temple) is an outstanding talent. So is J.R. Reid, the center from North Carolina, as is Sean Elliot of Arizona. Our scouts, however, have looked at seniors for three and four years. The underclassmen really only help provide a setting where some of these seniors perform. The seniors are the players we're scouting.

"It's funny. I'm like everybody else in the business. There is no more exciting time than the NCAA Tournament. Yet, how a senior plays in the tournament doesn't really decide how he'll be drafted. Sure, ideally, the player you really like would lead his team deep into the tournament and help his team win it. But the tournament is one of a number of factors you consider.

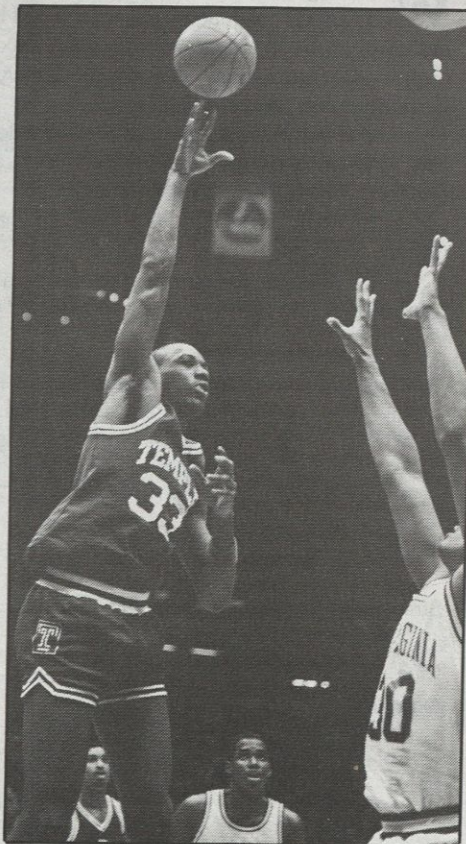
"Among the various factors you weigh over a period of time are his consistency over his career, his development and his performance in the post-season All-Star games. A player like Scottie Pippen, for example (Central Arkansas State): he played against relatively weaker competition throughout his career. We had to see him in the All-Star games. He passed his test when he was able to perform very well regardless of the level he played at. He's continued to play effectively with Chicago. Dennis Rodman was a similar case two years ago."

This season, according to Rodgers, the tournament went as expected; that is, the notion that the tournament was wide-open applied. But "parity" shouldn't be construed as mediocrity.

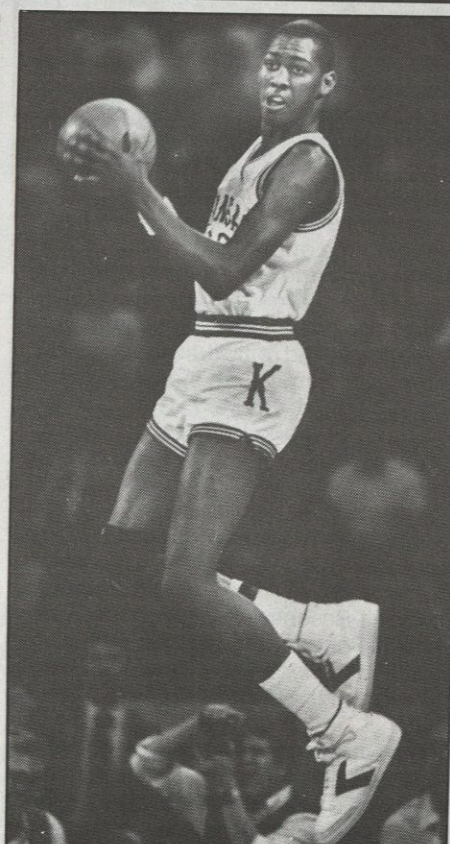
"Not at all. We're seeing the good veteran teams do well, like Purdue, Temple and Arizona. These are solid programs and they're earning recognition as a group of several fine programs. It reflects well on the game. Heck, John Chaney has been doing an outstanding job at Temple for years. So have Tom Penders (Rhode Island) and Dick Tarrant. It makes people in the business feel



Danny Ferry: Impressive Underclassman



Tim Perry: Strong Skills



Danny Manning: Sure Thing

good that they're in the spotlight."

Noticeable players among the senior prospects? "I think Will Perdue of Vanderbilt has played well all season and has continued to improve his stock in the tourney. So have the Purdue seniors (Everett Stephens, Troy Lewis and Todd Mitchell). I think Gary Grant of Michigan is one of the best point guards in the game. Another player who has helped himself in the spotlight has been Mark Plasky of Villanova; I think you see his success and you have to respect the way he's rolled up his sleeves and helped lead his team into contention. Tom Garrick of URI has been a comer.

"What is interesting about the evenness of the teams is that you're seeing talent spread throughout each team. Other than Danny Manning of Kansas and Mitch Richmond of Kansas State (both of whom I like very well), most teams aren't dependent on one player to lead them to the championship. Teams' success can come from one of several directions.

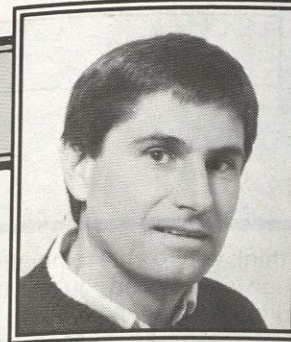
"It's funny. I'm like everybody else in the business. There is no more exciting a time than the NCAA Tournament. Yet, how a senior plays in the Tournament doesn't really decide how he'll be drafted..."

... Jimmy Rodgers

"A player can help himself in the tournament this way: suddenly, like a Garrick, he's able to see the opportunity to improve his game and is able to star against the improved competition that the tournament brings. As teams go, Rhode Island (with upsets over Missouri and Syracuse) and Richmond (with wins over Indiana, to dethrone the Hoosiers, and Georgia Tech) have helped themselves, too. But the individual player, for our purposes, is only adding another impression to our notebook on him.

Among other underclassmen who have been impressive Danny Ferry of Duke, B.J. Armstrong of Iowa and Rex Chapman of the University of Kentucky.

Another senior who has been impressive is Tim Perry of Temple, who according to Rodgers, has very strong skills in the shot-blocking area. "I think pre-tournament evaluation was correct: there isn't a clear-cut dominating team although there are several teams that are popular favorites, such as Temple. What we're seeing are a lot of good teams, a strong field. I don't see mediocrity at all. It's like asking is the pitcher half empty or is it half filled? It's good for the game. The more teams who are alive later in the tournament for the first time, the more solid pros will be getting the acclaim they deserve. That has to help the game everywhere."



GREENSLEEVES

By John Freeman

Basketball Heydaze

When ESPN's Bob Ley goes home, which isn't too often these days, he relaxes by not turning on the TV set.

"You've got to take a stand someplace," said Ley, host of ESPN's mammoth NCAA coverage that would turn any normal sports fan into a zombie. Turn on ESPN any time of the day or night and if you don't see a basketball game, you've got the wrong channel. Aside from "Sports Center," it's hoops, hoops and more hoops on ESPN.

Ley, who joined ESPN nine years ago, admits he finds himself infused with a certain amount of excitement during tourney time, even as he tries to remain neutral in his role as host.

"This time of year the virus infects every basketball fan," he says. "We lose all sense of time, sense and reason. Most fans, I must say, are not anti-social. I would trust them with blunt objects. But I'm not sure I'd trust them with my

children."

ESPN's explosive growth in the 1980s — "I like to say we've gone from taking a Greyhound bus to riding the Concorde," says Ley — has paralleled the growth of the NAAs.

"With all the freedom we have, there's no other place I'd want to work," says Ley. "We try to stay on top of everything that's happening (during the NAAs). It's an incredible logistical and editorial challenge."

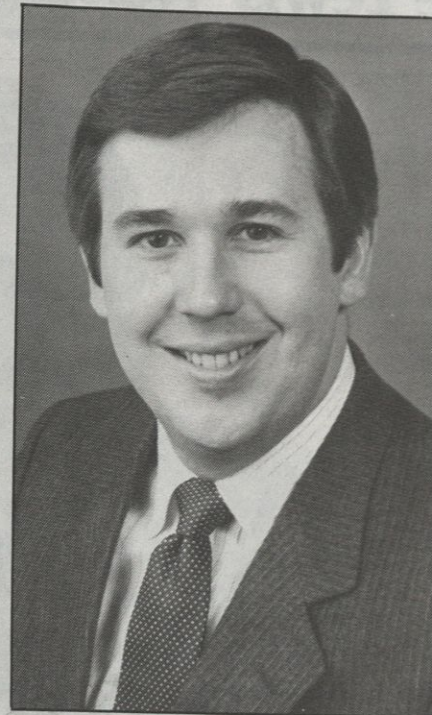
As a special feature, ESPN's coverage this year includes live "cut-ins" to games around the country, bouncing wherever upsets are brewing. No game will go uncovered, no score unreported, no statistic overlooked.

"People may say we're guilty of overexposing the thing," Ley says. "But our ratings are 'way up and they go up every year. It's something people want. It's quality basketball."

Ley, who appears more sober-sided than frequent sidekick Chris Berman, says he prefers to think of sports beyond simple scores.

"We don't just do Quebec-Hartford (NHL) highlights every night," he says. "We touch a lot of people here, especially with our features. If we do our job well and we always remember the big picture, there's value to be imparted from what we do 24 hours a day."

An honors graduate of Seton Hall University, Ley says he "considered going to



Bob Ley of ESPN

law school, but I decided there are probably more lawyers than sportscasters." So he paid his dues for a few years at a cable station in East Orange, N.J., where he learned the business inside and out. "It's a challenging way to make a living," he says. "And it's fun, especially this time

of year. There are certain, larger lessons about life that some basketball coaches impart and some players learn, but in general it's just good fun and we're all escaping. Are we looking to be Albert Schweitzer, going off into the jungle and finding a cure for the world's ills? No.

"This is fantasy world stuff... until a story breaks like at Canisius (where a basketball player died during a game) or at LSU (a former player died) or at Arizona State (vicious catcalls were aimed at Arizona's Steve Kerr).

"Those people at Arizona State aren't fans: they're psychopaths. That really stopped me in my tracks when I heard that. I almost got sick to my stomach."

Ley has some advice for the millions who will spend every waking hour — "like I will" — watching the NAAs.

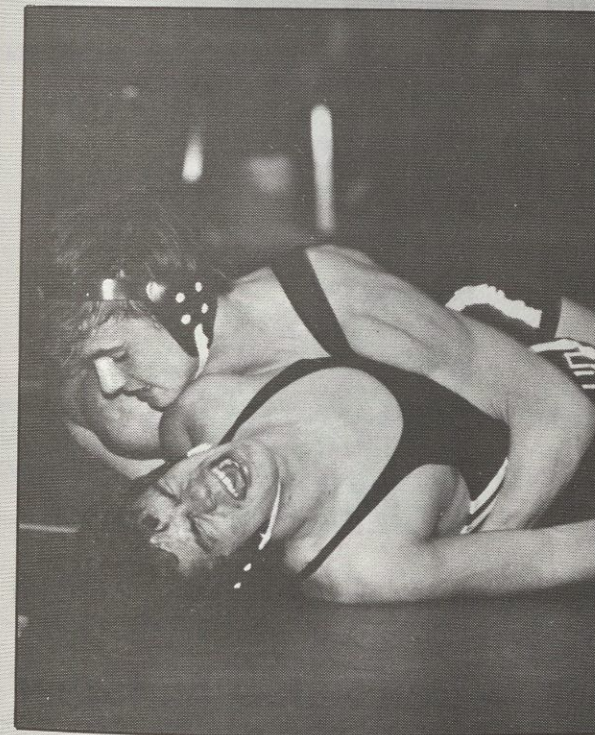
"I just honestly hope that everyone who watches us spends as much time watching CNN and thinking about the presidential elections," he says, "because the moment you think this is important to the quality of your life... beyond a few hours of fun, then you're in trouble."

Ley recalls one moment from last year's blur of telecasts that stands out in his mind, even now.

"It was the Big Sky final, believe it or not," says Ley. "Idaho State, the seventh seed, had just upset the favorite, whoever it was, and received an automatic bid to the NAAs. The buzzer sounds, and, God bless our director, he stayed on the star, who did a Pat Cash and went up into the stands and hugged both his parents."

"That said as much about what we're doing as anything... about what this tournament means to the kids and their parents and the schools."

Kodak/Celtics Pride Photo Contest



2nd Place



1st Place



3rd Place

Pictured above are the first, second and third place finishers in March's Kodak/Celtics Pride Photo Contest. First place honors go to Rufus Abdullah of Providence, RI. For his efforts, Rufus will receive several exciting prizes, including a Kodak 35mm camera and an opportunity to sit court-side and photograph a Celtics game at Boston Garden.

Second and third places were awarded to Robert Diller of Lancaster, PA and Andy Stevens of Rowayton, CT, respectively. Both Robert and Andy will receive the following prizes:

- A personally autographed color photo enlargement of their favorite Celtic.

- *Home of the Brave*, the 1987 Celtics highlight film.
- A complimentary 1-year subscription to *Celtics Pride*.
- Kodak film.

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THE BEST DAY THEY EVER HAD

Reggie Lewis' NCAA Performance vs. VCU

Reggie Lewis is a reserved type. Nearing the end of his rookie season with the Celtics, a year in which he's played sparsely, he has refused to yield to the temptation of argument. "I'm patient," he says. "Patience is something I'm fortunate to have." This is the player who came to Northeastern University as a freshman and surprised then-assistant coach Karl Fogel.

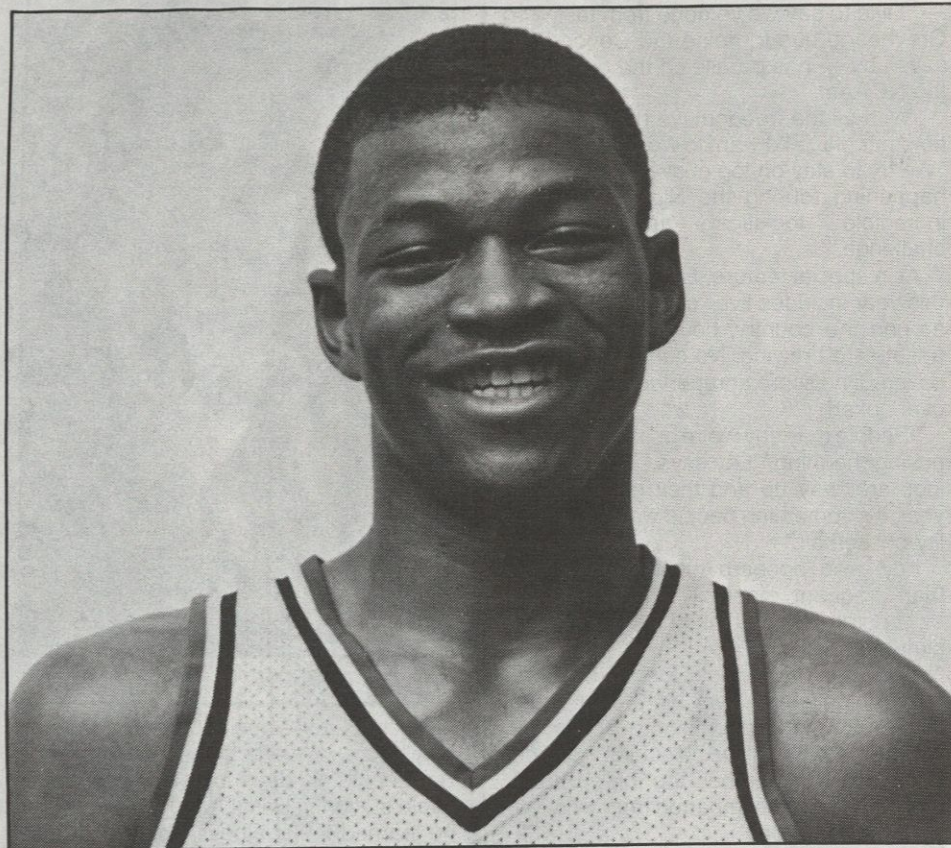
Fogel recalled, "He was the only player I've ever tried to recruit who remained silent — totally silent — throughout the entire recruitment meeting." Reggie Lewis has always preferred to remain within himself, study, and then let his aggressive offensive style speak for him. Lewis emerged from the heralded Dunbar High School team in Baltimore and proceeded to star at Northeastern in Boston and he has impressed experts around the Celtics' scene with his ability.

Lewis' best game in his career, unsurprisingly, came as a collegiate. "I really have to go back to my career at Northeastern. My freshman year turned out real well. I had come off the bench at Dunbar (that team featured David Wingate, Reggie Williams and Tyrone Bogues, under coach Bob Wade and the team went 59-0 over Lewis' final two seasons, to be ranked Number One in the U.S.), so I was pleased that I was able to play so well so fast. The final two games of my freshman season were good ones. Particularly the last one, in the NCAA Tournament against Virginia Commonwealth when I shot 15 for 17 from the floor.

Lewis had helped spark the Huskies to their best season in school history, leading the team to a 27-5 mark. As a first year player, his hustle led the team to key wins in the ECAC North Atlantic Conference and a berth in the tournament. The Huskies were also fortified by a power player underneath in Mark Halsel and a good collegiate point guard, Lewis' friend, Andre LeFleur. For the first of four straight seasons, Northeastern won the Conference. For the first of four consecutive years, Lewis earned post-season honors. He won Rookie of the Year in the ECAC, made the All-Rookie Team and was named Rookie of the Week four times. Lewis finished fourth in Eastern Basketball Magazine's voting for best first year player in the East, with Dwayne "Pearl" Washington winning the top prize.

The 1983-84 collegiate season was highlighted by the battle for supremacy in the center position. The Final Four that season would feature four outstanding big men, including Patrick Ewing of Georgetown, Akeem Olajuwon of Houston, and Sam Bowie and Mel Turpin of the University of Kentucky. In the tournament, the teams that weren't able to match up underneath were destined to fall early. Halsel, at 6'7", was the Northeastern power player, and the Huskies had difficulties early.

Lewis had scorched the Maine Black Bears in the final of the ECAC Tournament by shooting 14 of 18 and notching 30 in an 80-72 win. Then in the first round of the tournament, he again played



Reggie Lewis: This Freshman Could Fire

superbly, scoring 32 when Northeastern nipped Long Island University, 80-77. This matched the Huskies with Virginia Commonwealth, a game between two teams that had to rely on quickness and shooting to advance anywhere. Northeastern had had a triple OT defeat to the University of San Francisco in 1982 and the game against VCU was similar. And again, Northeastern would lose in a heartbreaking fashion.

The Huskies led most of the way because they shot superbly: .750 for the game, .762 in the second half. They shot out to a lead of 21-13 and 29-21 before finally leading at the half, 36-33. "The quality of the game is what I remember," commented Lewis. "The atmosphere in the NCAA Tournament is something special and I kind of just responded." The freshman connected on eight straight field goals in a period overlapping the first and second halves, and the Huskies were playing well. "But they didn't quit and we made some turnovers that kept the score close."

The lead would change hands in the final minute. NU lead 69-68, but VCU ended up with the final possession. Mike Schlegel inbounded from the sidcourt area and the veteran Rolando Lamp shook free Wes Fuller's defense. Lamp received the pass with :02 remaining, took a dribble and was able to pivot to gain strength for the jumper. The turnaround dropped through, giving VCU a 70-69 triumph.

I profitted from what my coaches taught me in school," Lewis said. "They were always pushing us hard in practice. It prepared us mentally for whatever came up: winning, losing, or, for me, being able to handle the publicity that went with being the 'star' of the team. I

really think you're able to handle things like tough losses when you're in the habit of working hard all the time."

Lewis' freshman season reflected some impressive statistics. He averaged 17.8 ppg (playing forward then) and his 571 points broke Pete Harris' school record for scoring for a first-year player. Lewis shot 53% for the season and his free throw shooting percentage was 69%.

Those numbers were firmly highlighted by Lewis' performance in the Meadowlands against Virginia Commonwealth. Lewis shot 15 of 17 from the field, and had 42 points in 32 minutes. He had 8 rebounds, 1 assist, and 1 steal to nearly put Northeastern over the top.

"But it was OK," Lewis says now. "I had had a good year. In high school, I was used to being part of a system, coming off the bench and playing an up-tempo game. We'd give the ball to Muggs (Bogues) and go. At Northeastern, it was more of the same. We had a strong system and the stability there made everything feel like it was going to work out."

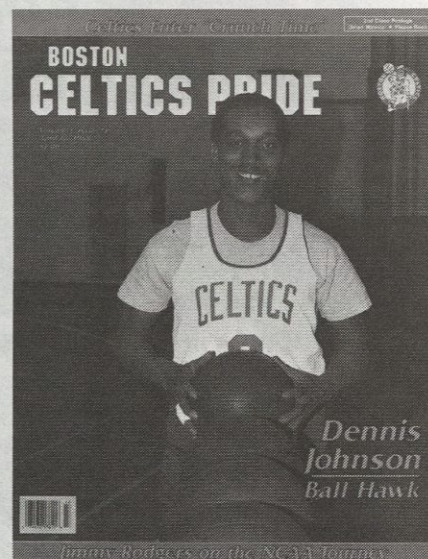
Lewis would lead the Huskies into the NCAA Tournament four straight seasons. He would be named Most Valuable Player of the ECAC North Atlantic in 1985, 1986 and 1987, the final season highlighted with his being selected the Celtics' number one draft choice in June.

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Billy Cunningham: From Coach to Broadcaster

Life in the Game

By Jan Wrotnowski

What would your choice be? Basketball's been your life. You're an NBA Hall of Famer and a very successful pro coach with 454-196 won/lost record, plus one league championship under your belt. And now you've even worked your way into a chance to be an NBA owner. From player to coach to owner, sounds as if things are progressing quite nicely, right? But then along comes CBS.

Of course, it should be noted here that previously you've also had some brief (and reasonably enjoyable) forays into the world of broadcasting, specifically with the aforementioned network: a short stint after your playing days ended and then again for a season or so after coaching. But you're an owner now. Finally you're in a position to make those personnel decisions over which you had no control when you were playing or coaching. Sure, CBS is offering you their #1 analyst spot, nudging out Tommy Heinsohn in the process. But you'll have a slew of bosses over you in television. With your new franchise, the Miami Heat, you'll be the boss. What do you want to be, Broadcaster or Team Owner? Which would you choose?

Well, if you're Billy Cunningham, you actually have had to make such a decision. And if you've been watching the NBA on CBS, you already know what he chose to do.

"Broadcasting, why not? ... I have the best seat in the house. It's something that I enjoy. It was a tough decision, because not too many times are you faced with two good opportunities, that you have to make that type of decision. It took a little soul-searching, but we came up with this."

But, you may be asking, Billy C., why not do both? Well, that sounds ideal, and Mr. Cunningham probably would've enjoyed that dual challenge. But unfortu-

nately, CBS got a little nervous about that possibility. It just might be interpreted as a little conflict of interest there. So it looks like you just can't have it both ways. Still, why broadcasting?

Well, it appears you're not really going to get any clearer explanations from Cunningham. Others have speculated that he opted for the CBS opportunity because of the apparent financial security and the chance to return to the limelight that it offers. And anyway, Cunningham claims that he really would have had little or no involvement with the Heat once their seasons started in the Fall:

"I'll be involved with the Miami fran-

chise through the college draft and the dispersal draft and, hopefully, finding a coach. I felt my job was in helping to get the franchise started. After that point even if I stayed, I would not run the day-to-day operations. I just felt that at that point I would have done my job. That from there on, I'd merely be acting as a consultant, anyway."

OK, so for whatever reasons, Billy Cunningham chose broadcasting over NBA ownership. But why did CBS choose Cunningham over Heinsohn? To some extent, the answer may be found in the way Cunningham responds to any questions posed to him, not in the specific content of his responses, mind you, but in his method of response.

Speaking with Cunningham, you immediately find yourself in a position much like that of the lead broadcaster, the play-by-play man, on an NBA telecast. You do most of the talking, and he reacts, sometimes. Cunningham seems to slip so naturally into this number two role. You'd have to conclude Billy's method of handling "color" is just what CBS prefers and prescribes. Unlike Heinsohn, Cunningham's responses and reactions seem measured, tempered, almost scripted, scripted so much that when you repeat them, you're almost afraid you'll be accused of plagiarism because you know you've heard and read Cunningham saying the exact same things at other times and in other places.

Needless to say, this can be quite frustrating. But yet, it's also quite telling. For here's where you may get a clue as to how Billy C. won the hearts of CBS.

Tommy Heinsohn's broadcasting style is much more offensive. (Laker fans have been particularly offended, it's been reported. And CBS certainly is affected by pressure from Lakerland.) But what's meant is that even when Heinsohn's in the #2 slot, he's willing to jump in and take his shot, to speak out in his sometimes strident, rough-edged tones. A little unpolished, but never boring at least.

On the other hand, Billy Cunningham's style is much more defensive. In compari-

son to Heinsohn, he'd have to be labeled smooth and even-tempered, hardly ever offending anyone. And since this appears to be the direction in which CBS wants to take the analysts' role, Cunningham is doing what he must, to keep his network bosses happy. And who can blame him for that now?

Of course, beyond style considerations, there's still no questioning Cunningham's basketball expertise. The guy knows the game. His record stands on its own. And thus, what specific basketball comments can be pried from him still command attention.

What's Cunningham's overall assessment of the Celtics right now?

"I think there's no question, there's such a need for a spark coming off the bench for that team. You don't have to be a basketball person to see that. For example, last night (February 22nd, Celtics vs. Knicks in Hartford), they had one field goal from their bench. And it doesn't have to be someone that scores, just someone that brings an emotional lift to the team ... that's lacking right now. Their starting five are still great. But I think they're gonna have their hands full at the end of the year."

And Cunningham's assessment of the Eastern Conference playoff contenders:

"Right now I'd say Detroit is the team that the Celtics have to be most concerned with in regards to getting back to the finals. The reason I don't mention Atlanta is they have a couple of injuries and they seem to be out of synch besides."

And the West?

"The Lakers, of course. And maybe even Houston has a chance, if they can blend together with the new faces they've acquired. But after watching LA play Houston, they just overwhelmed them. Just sent them a message."

Does he feel LA has any weaknesses then?

"The scary thing for the rest of the league is, offensively, the Lakers aren't performing as well as they did last year. Statistically, they're down. But their defense has excelled this year."

Any specific observations about that Celtics-Knicks game he had just viewed?

"Gee! It looks like the Celtics are going to Larry Bird in a set offense almost every time, or every two out of three times down the court. You know, there's such a responsibility falling on Bird's shoulders. If he should ever go down or he just has an off night, what then? ... But the one thing about the Celtics is this team knows what it's going to take from them, to get to the finals. And that's their goal. And there's nothing else, I'm sure, on their minds."

All in all, you come away from a conversation with Billy Cunningham feeling good. It's just an ability he has. He may not say much new or of substance. But still he's always pleasant, personable, just downright nice. He's a family man whose biggest fans (and critics) are his wife and two daughters. And he's a man who works hard, who does his homework, as he carefully prepares himself for each new challenge. And so just as the Sixers organization, and his soon-to-be former Miami Heat partners, and even his colleagues and bosses at CBS do, you too, can't help but like Billy Cunningham. (Of course, it has to be noted that CBS's affections can change at a moment's notice, should there be any detectable drop in the ratings.)

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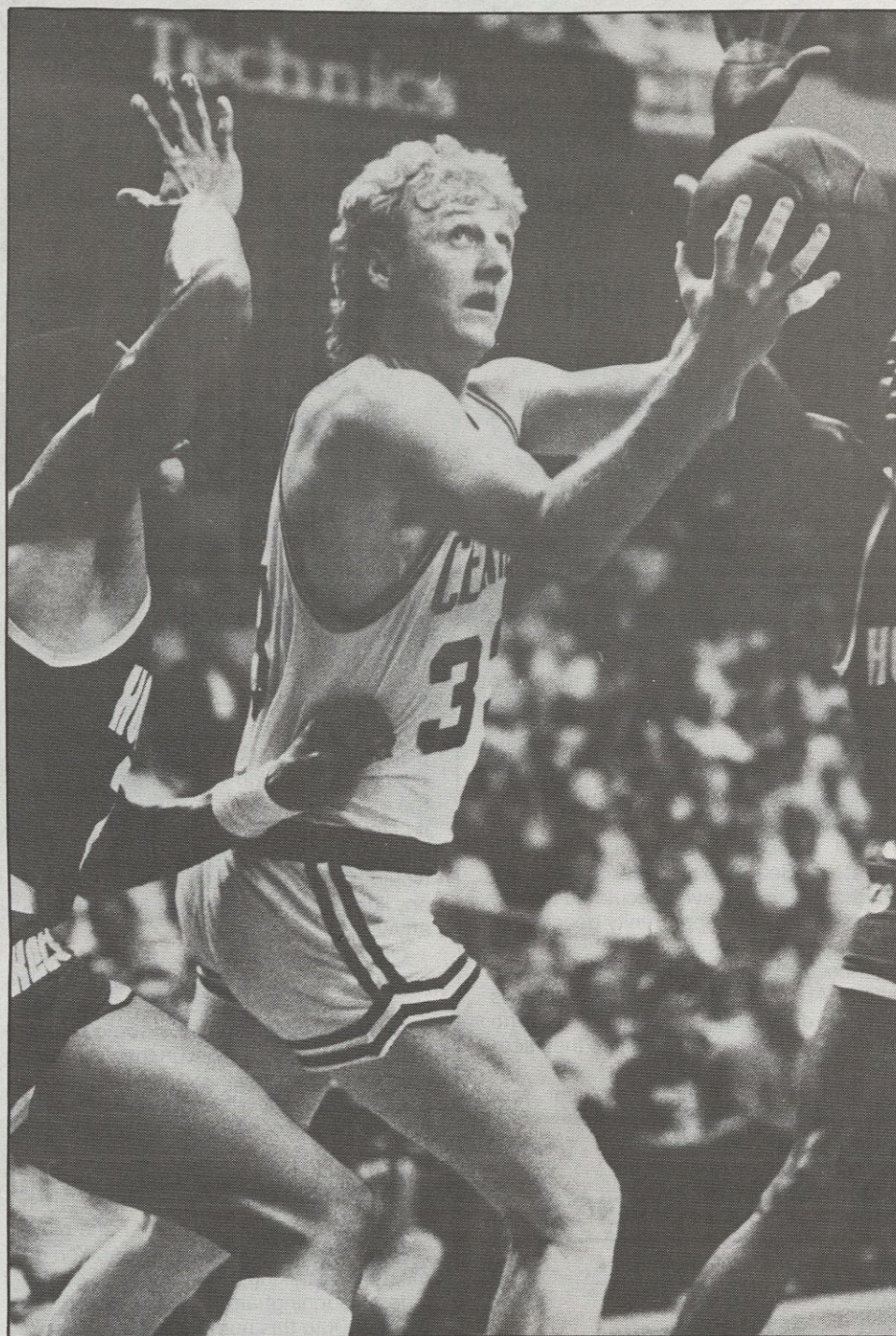
CELTICS MOSTS

Larry Bird's Career Scoring Average in the Playoffs

The arrival of Larry Bird in Boston in 1979 signalled a sharp reversal in the fate of the Boston Celtics. It would represent immediate success: Boston finished first in the entire National Basketball Association in Bird's rookie season, a pronounced 32-game turnaround from 29-53 in 1978 to 61-21 in 1979-80. Further, the Celtics established an instant heritage of success. Boston won several close games that year and they won consistently on the road — Boston was 8-33 in 1978-79 and 26-15 in Bird's first season. The Celtics would be eliminated by the 76ers in the Eastern Conference final series in '79-80 with Julius Erving and a more experienced unit finally spelling the difference. But the following season, after the Celts added Kevin McHale and Robert Parish, Boston reversed that setback, too. The Celtics won the NBA championship that season and have proceeded to win two more in the 1980s. And Larry Bird has been the cornerstone of this glorious decade.

Larry Bird is the Celtics' leader in career average scoring in the playoffs. Heading into the post-season later this month, Bird has averaged 24.5 ppg in 128 contests. There have been many, many triumphant moments in the playoffs for Bird, and they transcend an actual game-by-game description (although this applies too). Bird's brilliant 33 point, 14 rebound performance in Game Two against the 76ers in his rookie season was a masterpiece. It was a distinctive illustration of the young Bird, at once reluctant to dominate the shots in the offense, but still so talented that he would lead the club in scoring anyway. Bird moved without the ball to perfection that afternoon, and shot the ball in peak rhythm, to lead the Celtics to their only win over Erving and Philadelphia. Yet beyond the scoring feat, a singular play he made defensively served fair warning that Bird was out there for more than just the prestige accorded individual accomplishment.

Boston was in their motion offense and desperately straining to find a synch in the passing game (that never would arrive). They lost the ball when Tiny Archibald broke the wrong way on a



Larry Bird: Spectacular Plays

Bird hauled down 21 rebounds. But the measure of success in the post-season is twofold — being able to play with intensity, but being able to play with indomitable presence of mind at the same time. Thus the relatively modest 43 high in points in the post-season. More important is the consistency of being able to reach the final round in the eighties. Bird is able to play within the team's needs, depending on the particular opponent and depending on the round.

There has been a procession of spectacular plays that have turned the tides of fortune for Boston. In 1981, Bird attempted a twenty-footer from the right wing, followed up that miss and, as he was heading over the end line (whence his dash for the rebound had carried him) he tossed in a twelve-footer left-handed. The ball never hit the floor the entire time, and Bird had attempted two shots in the same moment, one with each hand. Boston rallied to win that vital Game One of The Finals against Houston.

In 1984 Bird turned in a series of magnificent plays on his way to 39 points, highlighted by a triple-double and a Game Seven win over the Knicks in a semifinal round. In 1986, Bird circled out to the three-point area and dropped home a high-arching shot to effectively kill any chances the Rockets had of forcing a Game Seven in The Finals and the Celtics had their third championship of the eighties. Last season, of course, was the famous Bird steal of an Isiah Thomas inbound pass in Game Five of the Eastern Conference final. Bird had had his lefty baseline drive rejected and had been flat on his back when Detroit won possession of the ball. Yet, he regained his feet, recognized the development of the play by watching Bill Laimbeer and made the critical play.

Bird's scoring averages during his playoff career have increased steadily since his only off post-season in 1981-82, when he shot .427 and averaged 17.8 ppg. He won the Playoff MVP in 1984 with a 27.5 ppg average and did it again in 1986 by averaging 25.9 ppg, a season in which, teammate Scott Wedman stated, 'Bird never passed better.' Last season he gamely rallied an injury-plagued team, coldly determined to win titles back-to-back, and averaged 27.0 ppg, the second-highest mark of his career.

"A player like Larry is like the Pied Piper," says Jones. "In the playoffs he leads the team and everybody else is willing to follow. They become supportive, and they become better with a guy like that around."

"When a guy's got the ability, what can you say?" asks Kevin McHale. "Larry's done it consistently for so many years. When he's confident about our chances to win, I usually feel good about it. Because then we usually win."

"I don't try to change anything when I go into the playoffs," says Bird about his routine. "The playoffs are exciting because they're so competitive, and I pride myself on my ability to compete. I just go out and play hard. Sure, there's a pride in scoring on a consistent basis. But I honestly take a higher pride when we play well as a unit and win."

pass from the wing. The ball rolled swiftly into the Celtics' backcourt and headed out of bounds over the end line. But suddenly Bird appeared, charging powerfully toward the ball, racing the speed of the ball. He was fifteen feet behind as the ball neared OB. At that moment, Bird dove headlong across the parquet, charging into the scorers table nearest the Celtics bench. He failed to retrieve the ball; he succeeded in doing what he has always done as a Celtic. He dominated the aura of the contest, the momentum of the competition between the Celtics and their opponents. He has continued to do this, and, as K.C. Jones says, "with incredible talent besides that large heart."

Bird scored 43 against the Detroit Pistons in the 1985 playoff semifinal round, and he has had several triple-doubles, including a masterpiece against the Houston Rockets in Game Six of the Sweet Sixteen championship in 1986.

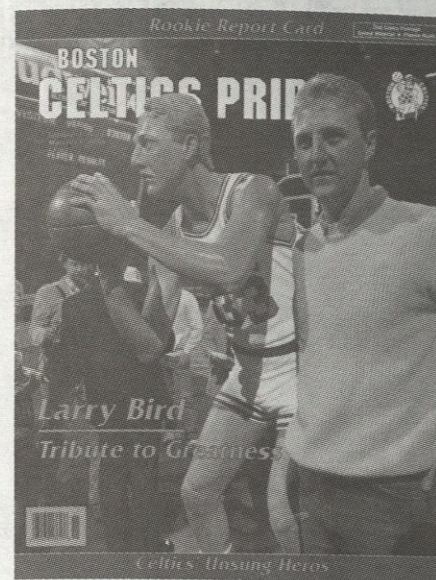
Against the Lakers and against the Rockets (in 1984 and 1981 respectively),

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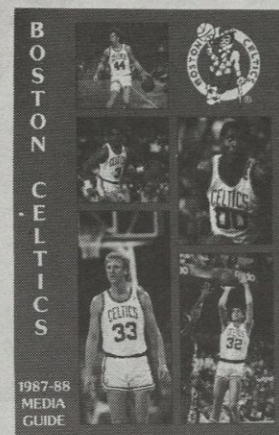


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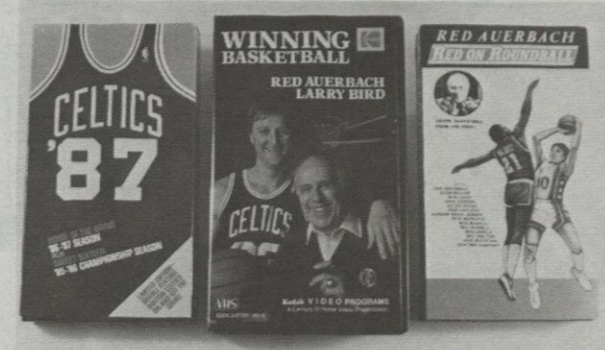
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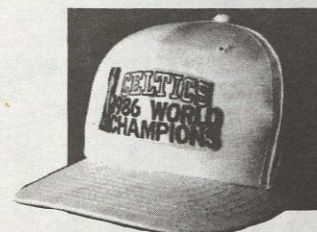
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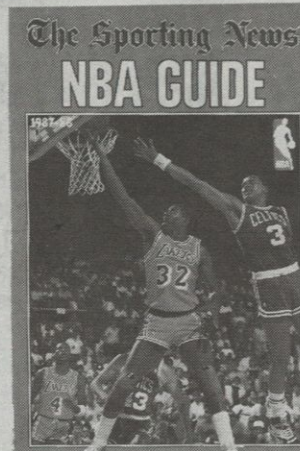
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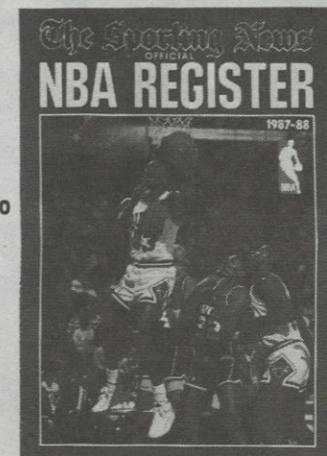
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